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EDITORIAL NOTES

J. R. CAMPBELL

WHAT THE RIGHT WING REALLY WANTS

R. PALME DUTT

THE COMMONWEALTH TODAY

JOHN LEWIS

THE SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

DISCUSSION:

LIONEL MUNBY

ON CULTURE AND SOCIALISM

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Editorial Comments

IN the Marx-Engels correspondence there is a circular drawn up by Engels in relation to an attempt by Hochberg, Bernstein and Schramm to water down the policy of the German Social Democrats in 1879. In many ways the circular could apply to the attempt of Mr. Gaitskell's circle to supply the Labour Party with new thoughts (or rather old thoughts re-vamped). The Germans of 1879 told the world that they did not want to: "Give up our party and our programme, but think that for years to come we shall have enough to do if we concentrate our whole strength and energy on the attainment of certain immediate aims which must in any case be achieved before the realisation of the more far-reaching aspirations can be thought of."

Engels commented: "The programme is not to be given up but only *postponed*—for an indefinite period. One accepts it, though not really for oneself and one's own lifetime but posthumously, as an heirloom to be handed down to one's children and grandchildren. In the meantime one devotes one's 'whole strength and energy' to all sorts of petty rubbish, and the patching up of the capitalist order of society so as to produce at least the appearance of something happening, without at the same time scaring the bourgeoisie."¹

Gaitskell and Company wanted to outdo those nineteenth century German reformists. They wanted to change the party aims as well as to concentrate on minor reforms. The party members, however, have forced them to take their hands off the party aims. The Gaitskellites can still carry through the essence of their policy, namely, keep Clause 4 with the party aims as a kind of abstract ideal, but in the day to day policy concentrate on "all sorts of petty rubbish". The problem of the Labour Party membership, having defeated the attempt to drop Clause 4, is how to go on from there.

In the same circular, Engels had an excellent description of the role of bourgeois circles in the German party which might well apply to the intellectually arrogant but abysmally ignorant Gaitskell circle of today:

"In order to be of use to the proletarian movement these people must bring real educative elements into it. But with the great majority of German bourgeois converts that is not the case... There is an absolute lack of real, educational

materials, whether factual or theoretical. In its place there are attempts to bring superficially mastered socialist ideas into harmony with the exceedingly varied theoretical standpoints which these gentlemen have brought with them from the universities or elsewhere. Instead of thoroughly studying the new science to begin with, each of them preferred to trim it to fit the point of view he had brought along, made himself forthwith a private science of his own and at once came forward with the pretensions of wanting to teach it."²

How well that fits the right-wing intellectuals whose favourite pastime is to canalise monopoly capitalist ideas into the Labour movement!

Think of the contribution of the Croslands, Jays and Gaitskells. In their pre-General Election pamphlets, particularly *Industry and Society*, their intellectual guides, Mr. A. A. Berle and Mr. Peter Drucker, were well-known defenders of the U.S. monopoly capitalism. Now they have clasped to their bosom Professor Kenneth Galbraith of the U.S.A. Despite that gentleman's acute analysis of certain aspects of monopoly capitalism, he is little more than a reformer of the type of Mr. R. A. Butler. Still, if one creates a moral and intellectual vacuum by shutting out socialist ideas from the movement, some rather tinpot bourgeois ideas are bound to take their place. That is what is happening today.

Arnold Wesker's Plays

The production at the Royal Court Theatre of Arnold Wesker's Trilogy is certainly one of the more hopeful enterprises of the contemporary theatre and new evidence of a more healthy and progressive trend in British drama. Ten years ago the London theatre was in as dismal a condition as could be imagined. During the last few years there has been considerable improvement, for which Theatre Workshop must be given the chief credit. The Royal Court Theatre has dabbled in some rather grimy concoctions but has also to its credit the "discovery" of John Osborne, Willis Hall and some other worth-while dramatists. But Wesker's Trilogy is undoubtedly its most important venture, though the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, should really have the praise for launching the plays. The good thing about Arnold Wesker's plays is not so much that they are highly political as that they are genuinely contemporary, as op-

¹ Marx and Engels to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke and others, mid-September, 1879. In *Marx and Engels, Selected Correspondence, 1846-95*, p. 373, Lawrence & Wishart.

² *ibid*, pp. 375, 376.

posed to merely fashionable. What a relief to listen to people on the stage arguing about something that matters, bothered about something more interesting than the state of their souls or psyches! It is true that the plays, as discussion of the problems of contemporary socialism, do not get us very far. Neither *Chicken Soup with Barley* nor *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* has a framework, artistic or ideological, strong enough to permit the fullest development of the problems they raise. They remain the record of individual hopes and fears rather than resolved works of art.

Roots is a play of real originality and depth. Its raw material—the life of agricultural workers whose aspirations have been all but destroyed by the dreary narrowness of their lives and the crude consolation of commercial culture—might seem to be the least promising of the three plays, but, in fact, the unpromising subject-matter becomes a challenge to him, as it does to his heroine, Beatie Bryant, and out of the challenge emerges a fine and deeply progressive play. Very basic to the merits of *Roots* is the perception that in Britain, where capitalist agriculture has destroyed almost every vestige of peasant culture, the problems of the rural working class are not essentially different from those of the townspeople. There is, in *Roots*, no bogus “back to nature” sentimentality.

It is interesting to notice already the effect of time on Wesker's Trilogy. *Chicken Soup With Barley* ends with the low-water mark of the Kahn family's political hopes in December, 1956, just after Hungary. Of a family that has been deeply and actively involved in the struggle for Communism only the mother, Sarah Kahn, remains loyal to the Party. When the play was first produced in 1958 many of the audience saw Sarah's affirmation of faith at the end of the play as a rather pathetic clinging to an emotional attitude. She might have *feeling* on her side, but the *arguments* belonged to her disillusioned family. In 1960 the reaction is significantly different, and it is Sarah's faith which now seems the deeper realism.

The Paper-Back Revolution

When Allen Lane published his first Penguin paper-back in 1935 it was the opening move in what is almost a cultural revolution. The possibility of acquiring for 6d. a well-designed, compact paper-back edition of an important work attracted very many unable to afford bound volumes.

While prices of the latter remained constant, Penguins had the field to themselves and went from strength to strength. Only after the War,

when publishers began to adjust book prices to increased costs, did paper-back publishing begin to spread. There was at once a spate of thrillers and war books, of popular editions of successful novels, where the “bosoms and bottoms” covers were often the principal selling point. Then reprints of classics followed, usually in more sober guise, but no longer at the old modest prices. Penguins rose to a minimum price of 2s. 6d., with some issues at 5s. or even 7s. 6d.

Other publishers moved in as soon as it became evident that bound books were suffering in the battle with paper-backs. Now, most leading publishers have issued, or are planning, their own series of paper-backs, of new works or reprints. These are far removed from the garish “pops”; publishers are rapidly coming to regard paper binding as a normal method of presentation. It has even been suggested that all books should first appear as paper-backs and only reach the prestige of cloth-binding if their success justifies it.

The effect on reading habits is incalculable, but it can hardly fail to be salutary. Already many people, impatiently awaiting a book for which a queue has formed at the public library, now buy the cheaper edition for themselves. The success of established masterpieces (formerly regarded as high-brow) comes from confidence in the easily approachable paper-back.

Publishers may be flooding this market in the search for quick profits, but, ignoring the rubbish, the increased accessibility of fine writing can only be a valuable step in the spread of knowledge.

Wain and Wilson on Russia

Those who over-estimated the depth and sincerity of the sort of protest associated with some of the “angry young men” must have been somewhat shocked by recent articles in the Sunday papers by John Wain and Colin Wilson following a visit to the Soviet Union. From Wilson, perhaps, nobody will have expected more than a display of egotistical bad manners; his own emotions under the influence of drink are obviously of far more interest to him (and expected to be of more interest to the reader) than his impressions of Leningrad.

John Wain is a slightly more interesting phenomenon. Several points are worth noting about his article in the *Observer* of August 7th.

(1) The (presumably) unconscious hypocrisy which can offer an article primarily designed to influence British readers in an anti-Soviet direction, and in particular to counteract the favourable impressions of other recent visitors to the Soviet

Union, as an "Open letter to my Russian Hosts" and in the guise of an attempt to *improve* Anglo-Soviet cultural relationships. And, incidentally, in the same breath to accuse the Russians of "Doublethink".

(2) The total incapacity to see the Soviet view about anything, combined with the glib know- ingness about every issue. ("It isn't that we don't understand why you tell your people that they live under the best and the most benevolent government in the world etc".) The most charit- able way of explaining this is that all the attitudes of scepticism, cynicism and liberal "opposition" which generations of capitalist society have fostered among British intellectuals are transferred bag and baggage, regardless of any kind of ap- propriateness, to socialist society. Every kind of "official" statement is automatically "propaganda" and untrue; every evidence of support or loyalty towards the government is automatically assumed to be due to ignorance, folly or blind credulity.

(3) The peculiar attitude towards their own and other British writing that emerges. If John Wain and Colin Wilson do not (as it appears) consider John Braine's *Room at the Top* an attack on Western capitalist society, what on earth do they consider it? And which are the British novels they would like to see circulating in the Soviet Union? Samuel Beckett's and Angela Thirkell's?

(4) A most significant paragraph on education: "Of 'education' in the traditional, central sense, of course, the concept does not exist among you. Education is the process whereby the mind is freed. . . . You have no education." And at the same time: "More people gain a detailed know- ledge of more things in Russia than in England." Presumably what the Russians need is the sort of education that will free them of their embarrassing detailed knowledge of things. Un- fortunate Russians, whose minds have yet to be freed to soar into the realms where hover those of John Wain and Colin Wilson.

Leningrad Symphony Orchestra

At the time of issue a symphony orchestra from the U.S.S.R. is visiting Great Britain. The Lenin- grad Symphony Orchestra of 120 players is appearing at the Edinburgh Festival, and sub- sequently between the 20th and 24th September it will appear at four London concerts at the Festival and Albert Halls. This will be the first symphony orchestra from the U.S.S.R. to visit this country.

Two conductors, Mravinsky, who has been associated with the first performances of many of

Shostakovich's symphonies, and Rozhdestvensky, a new name to many, together with several solo- ists, including the cellist, Rostropovich, will take part in the concerts.

An especially interesting fact is the support given at the Albert Hall concert by the Granada TV Network. This is a most progressive move on the part of this organisation.

Mathematics and Planning

As a socialist economy develops, the problems of planning become, in one sense, more difficult: in the sense that they become more complex and require more subtle tools to handle (in other re- spects they become, of course, easier to the ex- tent that the fundamental *political* tasks of building a socialist basis for planning and the foundations for growth in a developed heavy industry lie in the past). If one thinks of the problems that arise in the Soviet Union in supply- ing both a greater variety and quantity of consumer goods, and in the decentralisation of economic administration (since 1957) to some 120 distinct economic regions into which that country is now divided, one may begin to appreciate some of the complexities involved.

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, to find an increasing attention paid by Soviet economists recently to the use of mathematical methods of planning. This is signalled by the publication last year of a collective work, edited by the well- known statistician Academician Nemchinov, and entitled *The Use of Mathematical Methods in Economic Investigation*. It also finds expression in the institution of special departments for the study of such questions at the universities (here Leningrad and Novosibirsk seem to have been pioneers); also of special institutes, to study suit- able methods of "programming" economic material for processing by electronic computers, which are coming to be used increasingly both in planning and by industry.

In the past (to quote a recent article in the journal *Questions of Economics*) many Soviet economists thought that Marxist political economy was concerned primarily with the *qualitative* analysis of social and economic relations, to the neglect of analysis of them in their *quantitative* aspects. Without going to the other extreme, this one-sided approach is now being redressed, and more attention paid to the study of the quantita- tive aspect, especially in connection with those special problems in the political economy of socialism with which planners are concerned (price policy, investment policy, choice of tech- niques, achieving the correct balance of propor-

tions between different economic sectors and industries).

Except for certain formal techniques this has, of course, nothing to do with bourgeois "mathematical economics" (so fashionable, especially in America, today), which gives a mathematical covering or finish to what remains at bottom capitalist apologetics, displaying the beauties, if not benevolence, of the supposed inner workings of capitalism and of a "free" market system.

New Techniques

In this connection there is one matter of special interest to professional economists in this country. One of the specialised techniques of mathematical economics that has come into currency in the past two decades, and has been much boasted of in the West, is something called "linear programming". The only short explanation one can give of this is that it is a mathematical technique (or set of techniques) for dealing with certain very practical, but often complex, problems concerning such matters as the most economical routing and turn-round of ships, transport problems involving the conveyance of given quantities of freight with minimum loss of time and of vehicle space, the "optimum" use and "loading" of a battery of machines, etc.

It now transpires that this technique was invented by a Soviet mathematician, Kantorovitch, in a book published in 1939, on the eve of the war (and hence rather neglected at the time), several years ahead of the works of the so-called American "pioneers" of this method. This original work of Kantorovitch is today much quoted and discussed. The author has recently written a new work on similar lines, and a contribution by him is included in the collective volume referred to above together with another by the economist Novozhilov. The contribution by Novozhilov, in particular, seems likely to carry the discussion of socialist pricing policy of three years ago (summarised briefly at the time in *Marxism Today*) an important stage further. In it he develops the principle of "maximum economy of social labour" as a

socialist planning principle, linking it in quite a novel way with the question both of "cost prices" and of calculating the so-called "economic effectiveness" of different kinds of investment projects (e.g. are coal-burning or hydro-electric power projects preferable?).

Another novelty much publicised among "Western" economists in recent years has been the so-called "input-output" method, associated with the name of an American economist of Russian origin Wassily Leontieff. Writers in Soviet periodicals (for instance, Nemchinov) during the past two years have several times pointed out that this method was simply a development of the "method of material balances" worked out and applied by Soviet planners in Gosplan in the mid-1920's, and employed by them ever since (on an increasingly complex scale) as a central planning technique.

Today, there is a lively interest in, and critical study of, all such methods by Soviet planners, so far as they are usable in perfecting their own method of material balances.

Something can be Cut

In considering Britain's endemic balance of payments difficulties the July *Economic Review* wonders whether a cut in British capitalism's foreign investments and overseas military expenditure may be called for.

British finance capital is trying to export around £250 million capital per year, whether the state of its balance of payments permits it or not. In addition, it is expending no less than £174 million per year on overseas military expenditure. No other capitalist country has such millstones tied round its neck, hindering it from balancing its foreign accounts without strain.

No less than 1,750,000 people are still engaged in defence—550,000 are in the armed forces, 245,000 are in civilian employment, ministering directly to the armed forces, and 950,000 are still engaged in arms production and defence.

We agree with the *Economic Review*. Something can be cut here.

What the Right Wing Really Wants

J. R. Campbell

THE Fabian-spirited *Political Quarterly* devotes its July-September issue to a large-scale discussion of Labour Party problems. Of the eleven people contributing six are defeated candidates. Economic journalists, Readers in Economics, teachers of Economics and History, Labour Party research workers and right-wing Labour journalists make up the team. The main interest in this discussion is that the writing is clear, the right-wing aims of the contributors are succinctly stated and there is an absence of ambiguity. The whole thing adds up, however, to the enunciation of a thoroughly bad, stupid and reactionary policy. On the part of some of the contributors there is a malicious hostility to the Labour rank and file, both as trade unionists and as active members of constituency Labour Parties.

Right-Wing Contradictions

Though possessed of a common standpoint the contributors often contradict each other. Thus the editorial introduction tells us that "the chief argument for public ownership is the placing of economic power in public instead of private hands." It then adds "this was still evidently forgotten in 1959 when it was proposed to bring under public ownership industries which after full and careful inquiry . . . are found to be failing the nation—surely one of the silliest phrases ever included in a political programme." On page 286, however, we find Mr. Alan Day, a Reader in Economics at the London School of Economics, is working the silly phrase for all it is worth, "One of the greatest needs is to shake up the industries *that have failed the nation*—machine tools, shipbuilding, are examples. Can they be shaken up by nationalising one or two firms within the industry?" [Italics ours.]

On page 243 Mr. Michael Shanks, a member of the Executive of the Fabian Society, tells us that "the Labour Party needs its Utopians [elsewhere defined to include a large number of the local activists] to point the way to the ultimate goal and to remind it that the present state of affairs is not immutable." Evidently, however, "ultimate goals" are something very different from "ultimate ends", for Mr. Bernard Crick, Lecturer in Political Science at the London School of

Economics, is positively viperish about the latter. "The ethic of ultimate ends in politics, is, at its best, the phariseism latent in pacifism; at its worst, it is the ruthlessness of Stalinism," he tells us.

Why Labour Fell

In a compilation of this character one would expect, particularly from academic economists and lecturers in political science, some more concrete detailed explanation of why the Labour Party has been on the downgrade since 1951. No such comprehensive analysis is attempted. Mr. Shanks tells us that:

"The Attlee Government was, in my view, one of the very few great creative administrations of modern British history. . . . It did make Britain a better place to live in for the vast majority of her people. It did extend the dimensions of life for the average citizen."

Why then did the average citizen—ungrateful scamp—cease to vote in sufficient numbers for the Party which brought about a veritable revolution? Surely this requires some explanation. The editorial introduction tells us that "when the radical mood of these [post-war] days evaporated, *in part because the very success of the Labour government had given the people so much of the social revolution they demanded that they forgot the rest*, Labour was faced with a difficult choice" [Italics ours].

In the same vein this editorial introduction continues:

"The Labour Governments dug two graves for themselves; on the one hand they were thought of as being tyrannical, liking restrictions for their own sake, unwilling to 'set the people free', on the other hand they accomplished so much of what they set out to do, especially in abolishing the fear of unemployment, that the people's fire was spent before the job was finished."

These explanations are completely incredible. If the people had the first instalment of a vast reform programme given to them why should they forget? To refute this, one only needs to remember that the last year of the Labour government (from October, 1950 to October, 1951) was one of the worst post-war years for the majority of the British people. Retail prices shot up by fourteen points

while the male wage rates index only increased by ten points. Half of the twenty-nine per cent increase in retail prices which occurred between June, 1949—the base year—and October, 1951, took place in the last twelve months of this period. The purchasing power of wages and pensions fell. The Labour Government with Gaitskell as Chancellor, refused to raise basic pension rates and instead increased national assistance rates, with their means test provisions. Gaitskell and Attlee stopped all further social service developments. The National Health Service was left as a half constructed edifice. (Where are the Health Centres which were to be a basic feature of the scheme?) Indeed, the imposition of health service charges marked the end of the period of social reform and split the cabinet. The lesson of this is that whoever leaves out the effect of the cold war from 1948 onwards, and the arms drive from 1950 onwards, on the policies of the Labour Party is perverting history.

The British people did not begin to drift away from the Labour Party when it was loading them with social reforms. Before they began to drift away in 1951, the Labour Party had abandoned reforms and was projecting an annual arms expenditure which was treble that of 1950.

In fact the drift did not begin until after the defeat of 1951, for in that election the Labour Party still obtained 13,948,385 votes against 13,724,418 for the Tories.

It was in the slightly improved economic situation after the Tories took office that the drift began. Mr. Alan Day tells us the story of Tory luck. Up till 1951 the terms of trade were heavily against this country. After 1951 they began to turn in its favour and the Tory government benefited from this fact. This is true enough, but Mr. Day forgets that the sudden, abrupt change in the terms of trade which occurred in 1951 was the product of the rearmament drive, which the American and British governments started. The Labour government cannot therefore be absolved from responsibility for the inflationary spurt of 1951. The Tories were able to get the slight results that they did because one of their first acts on being returned was to cut the *annual arms expenditure*, which was contemplated by the Labour Party. This they did by spreading the global arms programme over a greater period of time.

After 1951 the Labour Party in Parliament could not fight for further social reforms because it was committed to the same huge arms expenditure as the Tories. It is simply not true to say that after 1951:

“Labour was faced with the difficult choice between continuing to press radical policies which were not in popular demand, and slowing down its tempo of reform, moving nearer to the Con-

servatives, but claiming it could do the job more efficiently and without the elements which make conservatism unpleasant.”

In fact Labour had dropped further reforms not because they were unpopular but because they were incompatible with the rearmament programme, and it did do what the *Political Quarterly* is now advocating it should do, namely, demonstrate that it could do the job more efficiently than the Tories. But in doing so it has been haunted by the dreadful record of its last year in office. So in writing Labour history do not forget the cold war.

When we are also told that nationalisation is unpopular we are entitled to ask whether this is in any way due to the manner in which the Labour Party carried through nationalisation. Michael Shanks tells us that:

“Much of the unpopularity of nationalisation today springs from the fact that the nationalised industries *set up in 1945-51 were required to follow policies which were in many cases impracticable or mutually contradictory*. There still appears to be no clear conception of what the role and functions of nationalised concerns in a mixed economy should be.” [Italics ours.]

Now surely this adds up to the fact that if Labour policy on the cold war and on nationalisation has had adverse effects on the fortunes of the Party in the last decade, it is necessary to ask which section of the Party was responsible for this. The answer is the same right-wing section (minus a few superannuated leaders) who are continuing to give the Party bad advice today.

The Right Wing Basis

The basis of this right-wing policy is enbalm in two sentences. “In practice the political choice at present must be between two political parties operating what is in effect a mixed *but predominantly capitalist* economy, but operating it in different ways with different objectives and priorities,” Mr. Shanks tells us, while the Editorial recommends a policy which consists of “slowing down its [the Labour Party’s] tempo of reform, moving nearer to the Conservatives, but claiming that it could do the job more efficiently”. The first thing about this policy is that it completely evades the question of the exploitation of the workers and the British people by monopoly capitalist groups. Mr. Shanks informs us that:

“When the founding fathers of the Labour Party asserted their belief in Common Ownership, the most obvious objective which they had in mind was the abolition of private profit, and the possibilities of exploitation of man by man which it created. If goods are held in common then the presumption is that they will be held equally. The division of society into capitalist and labourer is abolished. The labourer receives the full

reward of his labour—apart from the portion which goes to industrial re-equipment, and that which goes to social welfare and communal services; he does not have to carry on his back a crowd of parasitic and unproductive rentiers. Common ownership is therefore the most effective single weapon—in theory—for achieving equality.”

It is a pity that Mr. Shanks, having enunciated this theory of the “founding fathers”, passes on to talk of other things without saying what is wrong with it. Have the British workers ceased to carry on their backs “a crowd of parasitic and unproductive rentiers”?

In 1959 gross profits increased by 10 per cent, dividends by 13 per cent, and 19 per cent more was put to reserve. This still goes on. *The Economist* reports that the 878 companies whose balance sheets were published in the period April-June, 1960 increased their gross profits by £157 million (as compared with the same period last year), their ordinary dividends by £62 million, their allocations to their reserves by £53 million, and the directors’ emoluments by £2 million. With all this, and dear money too, the “parasitic unproductive rentiers” are not doing too badly. For while profits and dividends are going up, taxation is coming down. The standard rate of income tax which was 9s. 6d. in 1951-53 is now 7s. 9d. and Mr. Shanks gives it as his opinion that “there are limits to the extent to which income can be redistributed through taxation without damage to the economy, particularly under full employment when such redistribution is likely to prove inflationary.” So it looks as if the exploitation of man by man is likely to continue and the “parasitic and unproductive rentiers”, if the right wing have their way, will be with us for quite a long time.

Those Commanding Heights

Our right-wing guides do not appear to be enthusiastic about reducing “capitalist predominance” in the economy. Indeed, they seem to regard it as unnecessary; as Mr. Day says:

“The true commanding heights of the economy in these post-Keynesian days are held by any government which is willing to use its power to tax, its power to spend and its power to tell people not to do things. A government which is willing to vary its taxes on the economy as a whole, and on individual sectors, to hand out money for any purposes it wishes to support, and to impose direct controls as necessary *already possesses the commanding heights.*”

So if the aim is to iron out booms and slumps, to secure steady economic growth, to increase wages and extend social services, there is no need to bring more industries under public ownership,

with a view to effective economic planning. “The important thing is that now we understand Keynesian economics and have applied it successfully for many years. It is technically perfectly possible to avoid unemployment.”

Is it indeed? It is perfectly true that compared with pre-war all the recessions in Britain have been little ones. (It should be noted, however, that the 1957-58 one in the United States was of fair magnitude). The question, however, is whether this absence of mass unemployment is due to the Keynesian manipulation of the economy? If so, was the sharp inflation of the economy due also to the application of the well-thought-out Keynesian methods? Or is the absence of mass unemployment due to the peculiar circumstances of the post-war period, i.e., the huge post-war replacement in Britain (the nationalised industries played their role here) plus the stimulus which sometimes results in a capitalist economy when a bunch of innovations—developments in chemicals, petrochemicals, new fibres, electronics, atomic energy and automation—arrive simultaneously on the scene for profitable exploitation?

That impetus could wear off however. Since their recovery from the last recession neither the British nor the American economies seem able to get “off the ground” to any sharply significant effect. Indeed most capitalist economists (not to speak of the Marxists) are convinced that the cycle of boom and slump is now vigorously operating, and it is by no means likely that all the slumps in future will be little ones or that they will quickly respond to Keynesian treatment. The great motor firms of Britain are at the moment expanding capacity. It could be when this capacity is in full operation there will be a purchaser for every car turned out. It could equally well be that the potential market has been grossly over-estimated, as was the case in the U.S.A. in 1957-58.

So a recession could spread right down the line. Suppose this coincides with a fall of exports, there could be quite a nasty slump. Of course the government would intervene, but it might take quite a time before the economy would respond. Our right-wing experts would be well advised not to dismiss the possibility of more severe slumps in the future. So we can at least say that in the mixed economy exploitation will continue and unemployment threaten.

Capitalist accumulation

It is admitted on all sides that as compared with their nearest capitalist competitors the British monopolists are spending too little on economic growth. They can be caught up and surpassed in production and consumption by France and West Germany in the very near future. So one is natural-

ly interested in finding out, seeing that these gentlemen claim to know how to steer the capitalist economy, how they would promote a high rate of economic growth?

Mr. Day tells us that consumers (which presumably includes the wage and salary earners) must accept a smaller share of the national income, for the greater part of the lifetime of a parliament, say a period of three years. How this is done he does not say. Mr. Shanks, however, says "we shall need some measure of overall planning of the distribution of the national income—in other words some indication of the extent to which wages can be allowed to rise without jeopardising stability".

Now such a policy might make some sense in some early phases of the growth of socialist economy, in a formerly economically backward country. The people agree to only slight increases in consumption for a year or so, while more resources are devoted to expanding and improving the productive apparatus. In the end the community has (1) a greater productive apparatus; (2) a greater rate of growth of this apparatus, and (3) a larger amount of consumption than before. Even if this consumption is a smaller percentage of the national income, it is coming out of a much larger income, and is therefore larger. But this is only fully possible in a society where there are no dividend receivers and therefore no dividend leaks.

But in a capitalist society, where productivity is increasing, and wages are restrained, the results will be increased profits, a large amount of which is not ploughed back but is distributed in the form of increased dividends. In an article in the *International Labour Review* (the organ of the International Labour Office) for July 1960 this possibility is admitted, "While high profits, if invested productively *may ultimately* be in the interests of the entire community—especially in the underdeveloped countries, where they may help to create jobs for the unemployed, *they may also be ostentatiously squandered on imported luxury goods, and thereby worsen the mass distribution of incomes still further.*"

So the right-wing policy of stimulating economic growth could lead to a redistribution of income and wealth from the workers to the monopolists, and any additional productive apparatus, which might be created, would be owned, not by the people who sacrificed, but by the monopolists.

Next to their acceptance of the huge arms programme, the desire to increase the rate of economic growth at the expense of the workers has been one of the basic features of right-wing policy. It accounts for the exceedingly meagre character of the reforms which they advocate, for their main concern has been to restrict wages and social

services in the interests of armaments and monopoly capitalist economic growth. This in our opinion is one of the reasons for the decline of Labour influence since 1951. Right-wing Labour has been more interested in capitalist accumulation than many of the capitalists themselves.

Yet this is also why the right-wing treatment of the alleged affluence of the working class; their constant harking on "refrigerators, cars, holidays abroad", is so astonishing in its effrontery. For existing wage levels, though far from affluent, have been achieved because the unions have ignored the policy of wage restraint. Mr. Day tells us that by the time of the next General Election the workers' "average weekly pay packet" will buy twenty-five or thirty shillings more goods than it will today. But this is only possible if the unions are prepared to exert their full strength against the stiffening resistance of the employers, and if they ignore the advice to exercise wage restraint, and to halt consumption, in the interests of further capitalist accumulation.

First Things First

Most of the contributors agree that at the present moment resources are being allocated in a manner that is detrimental to the best interests of the people. They call upon the government to operate the economy in different ways, with different objectives and priorities. There is, for example, the enormous expansion of private house building—in many cases for people in perfectly good houses, while slum clearance goes forward at a snail's pace; there is investment in land speculation, which in the end leads to exorbitant rents, in preference to productive investment in industry; there is resistance to increased state pensions, combined with pressure on people to go in for group pensions or insurance pensions, which put more resources at the disposal of the great monopolies; there is the expenditure of £400 million on advertisements by means of which the monopolists hope to convince the mass of the people that expenditure on whatever goods (bad, good or indifferent) they are selling is more worthy than expenditure on schools and hospital building and slum clearance.

There is no doubt that these priorities must be changed, but the right wing fail to recognise that these priorities are not merely due to the existence of a Tory government, but also to the basic profits drive of the monopolists. The government could inaugurate certain reforms, but it is impossible to replace a capitalist order of priorities with a socialist order of priorities without attacking the monopolies. The new order of priorities would limit the profits of the monopolies and this they would resist. It is one thing for the monopolies to

co-operate with a Tory government (which is after all their creature) on their terms, and quite another thing for them to co-operate with a Labour government in establishing a different set of priorities.

Monopolies and near monopolies are firms out for the maximum possible profit, and as such they are powerful centres of economic and political power. They cannot be manipulated by a Labour parliamentary majority, as if they were armies obeying the behests of a general staff. They have their own profit seeking purposes which could conflict with the policy of the government and the public interest, and are quite capable of resisting the government. Between 1955 and 1959 they evaded the Representation of the People Act, which limits spending during elections, by donating vast sums to the Tory Party which were spent on lavish advertising immediately before elections. They constantly engage in lavish advertising, not to sell their goods but to create a fictitious reputation for themselves as public-spirited institutions and for the monopoly capitalist system of which they are a part. They are capable of creating enormous resistance to any government projects which they dislike.

The editorial introduction tells us that "the chief reason for public ownership is the placing of economic power in public hands." This is correct. To leave economic power in the hands of great private monopolies, as the contributors propose to do, and then expect those powerful organisations not to obstruct any worthwhile projects of a Labour government, is to fully deserve the epithet "Utopian" that the contributors are constantly bestowing on others.

All Socialists inside and outside the Labour Party must insist that if the threat of unemployment is to be completely removed, if the exploitation of man by man is to end; if a constant and unremitting improvement in power to produce wealth is to be achieved, if British industry is to move steadily upward like a powerful car climbing a steep hill—then there must be economic planning, and this involves as a minimum public ownership of the large firms in all large-scale industries.

As industry moves majestically upwards in such a set-up, social services will constantly improve, because pensions and other social services are like wages built into the economy, they improve as it improves and are a challenge and a stimulus for it to improve still further. As the planned economy climbs upward housing and town planning is accelerated (in its seven-year plan the Soviet Union proposes to build 15 million apartments, which is more than the entire housing stock in Britain); Education for all is improved, not merely edu-

cation for an élite, but for all, not only for children but for youth and adults. The advancing economy is geared to a sensible order of priorities. A good house is the basis of a good home for everyone. This implies a reversal of the existing trend, which condemns the present generation and its successors to live in slums and near slums, to have houses with television but no baths. Such changes are only possible when adequate resources are put aside each year to secure the expansion of the productive apparatus, when human needs are balanced against each other so that wages and social services advance together and efforts are made to improve all aspects of the environment. That is the case for the government occupying the commanding heights of the economy by further public ownership, this time on a democratic basis.

Today, however, we are, despite Keynesian doctrines, in an economic system that is unplanned, which does not advance steadily upwards, a crazy switch-back economy, up today and down tomorrow. The right wing proposes to leave the economy basically unchanged, but declare that it can be smoothed out a little by government intervention from time to time. This policy means that the Labour Party, which has already strong tendencies in this direction, must once and for all be changed into a party of the capitalist Establishment, playing a game of outs and ins with the Tory Party. It is against this perspective that the rank and file is fighting.

Compromise—Good and Bad

The articles, as we have said, are full of thinly veiled attacks on Labour's rank and file, which express themselves particularly in sneering remarks about its unwillingness to compromise. "There are those who find themselves totally opposed to the existing form of society and want to replace it by a completely different one. *This group is naturally opposed to any form of compromise,*" says Mr. Shanks. "But when in modern democracy are compromises not necessary? The attitude of mind which judges issues of policy *entirely in terms of their reference to traditional principles is appropriate to a religious sect or a small pressure group,*" he adds.

Mr. Alan Day says: "We must ask whether we conceive the aim of a political party as Utopian or empirical. If one is Utopian, then one refuses to compromise; the truth and the ideal must remain unsullied, and if this means that we cannot achieve power then so be it—when the millennium finally does come the wait will have been worth it, even if we are all dead."

These jibes are of such a silly character that one

wonders what connection the writers can possibly have with the active rank and file of the movement. Foremost amongst those who have resisted the abandonment or the watering down of the Labour Party's aims are the trade union cadres. Nothing is more laughable than to suggest "that this group are naturally opposed to compromise". As shop stewards or local branch officials they are in daily struggle with their employers on behalf of their members, and those struggles frequently end in compromise. If there is one thing that distinguishes these types of Labour Party workers, it is their willingness to extract as much as possible from the capitalist system, while adhering to their socialist aims and fighting for a socialist policy. These workers, however, know that there are compromises which leave the way open to further advance and compromises which close the way, and they repudiate the latter.

Or take the Labour militants in the local councils. They know that working within a framework of government regulations they have got to compromise; but some of them distinguish between those compromises which are admissible and those whose tame acceptance disgraces the Party. There have been too many of the latter in recent years, and votes have been lost in consequence. But what the right wing is advocating is not a tactical compromise, while retaining socialist principles, but the total abandonment of socialist aims and principles. They want the Labour Party to repudiate "ultimate ends", to repudiate socialist aims and to proclaim to the world that henceforth it is merely concerned to manage the present "mixed but predominantly capitalist economy". This is not a compromise. It is a complete change of direction. It is a complete abandonment of socialist aims. The Right is not calling for compromises on the way to the socialist goal—compromises in the operation of a socialist policy. It is calling for the total rejection of the socialist aims and of socialist policy.

Class Structure Today

The final argument of the right wing is connected with alleged recent changes in the class structure of Britain. Even if a socialist policy is logically the best, they argue, it could not be operated because the social groups which might be expected to back it, in the first place the industrial working class, are (1) shrinking in numbers, or (2) are changing in composition and outlook. This has been a stock argument against socialism for the last sixty years, since Edouard Bernstein first expounded it. In Bernstein's day, however, it was to the effect that self-employed groups, the

peasantry, one-man businesses, self-employed professional people, were on the increase.

This is not being pressed for Britain today, where it is now manifest that the people employed by capitalist firms or public authorities for a wage or a salary form definitely the most numerous and fastest growing group. Since 1954, the number of people in civil employment has increased by 3.5 per cent, the number engaged in all kinds of industrial production by 3.4 per cent, in manufacturing by 5.1 per cent, and in distribution by 7 per cent. The greatest increase in working class employment has been in metals, engineering, vehicles and chemicals, which on the whole are well organised and militant industries. Indeed, one can make this generalisation: that the percentage of people in the general population whose wages and salaries are fixed by some kind of collective bargaining is higher than ever before. And by and large it is the industrial working class which is the pace-maker in the wages and salaries movement. The salaries and conditions of employees in all grades of the civil service, in the nationalised industries and in local government service, move with those of the industrial workers and not the other way round.

One of the strange things about this right-wing analysis is the curious emphasis that is placed on the growth of the distributive trades. Mr. Merlyn Rees in the *Political Quarterly* dilates on the theme that "the long term trend of an increase of those employed by the distributive trades has been continued". Mr. C. A. R. Crosland, in his Fabian pamphlet, tells us that: "This upgrading of the labour force is certain to increase," and mentions "the continued relative growth of the distributive and service trades." Now, if there is a move from industrial work or manufacturing industry to distribution (which we doubt) it is a move from higher paid to lower paid occupations, it is downgrading. So why the increase of the number of people in those occupations should tell against the advance of the Labour Party is not clear. Mr. Merlyn Rees tells us that there has been "a general increase in female employment in a variety of occupations far removed from the typical domestic service of the first quarter of the century". As "typical domestic servants" were never classified as staunch Labour supporters it is difficult to see what relevance this has.

However, the right wing has two points that must be carefully considered and answered. Taking industry as a whole there is a growth in the proportion of administrative, clerical and technical staff employed, and this *might* continue. (We

stress *might* because it is precisely the administrative workers employed in large scale private and public organisations who are threatened by the application of automation to office work.) In addition there is the further fact that some of the younger elements of the working class are going away from the Labour Party. So the right wing automatically assumes that support for a militant Labour policy must shrink. This is nonsense. What it does mean is that it must not be assumed that such groups will automatically support a Labour Party that ignores their existence. If the technical and administrative staff is growing in industry, then the unions, taking account of that fact, must battle to bring them more fully within the orbit of trade unionism. The battle between unions and managements for the allegiance of such workers is going on all the time in capitalist society. The unions must employ better methods in waging it, and must ignore the right wing who have surrendered such sections to the Tories already.

Young workers

As for the young workers, the Labour Party has no right to assume that they will automatically follow "the dear old dad". In losing their allegiance the Labour Party was paying the forfeit for allowing the right wing to wreck the Labour youth organisations over a number of years. Nevertheless, these and other groups are living in a world of challenge and of change, and only on the basis of a socialist policy can their problems be solved. The worker in industry, be he an operative or a technical worker, is experiencing greater exploitation and is yielding a greater profit to his employer than ever before. He faces such questions as: Are the tremendous new productive forces to be organised and planned to raise living standards, provide greater leisure, create a really civilised environment for all the people, or must the lion's share of the increasing production continue to be appropriated by the powerful financial groups controlling British industry? Are we to have industries that move forward purposefully and planfully, or industries that move by fits and starts? In short, are we to have industries whose major aim is to meet the human needs of the many rather than the private profit of the few?

What is to be the role of the British people in the period when the world is being threatened with nuclear annihilation? Are they expected to keep step with the atom bomb worshippers of N.A.T.O. in a quick march to atomic nothingness, or are they, on the basis of an independent policy, to seek to escape from the nuclear trap and encourage

other people to do likewise? The colonies and ex-colonies are on the march. Are the British people prepared to support their economic and political self-determination, to find a basis of continuing fruitful co-operation with them, or are they going to utterly disgrace themselves, by obstructing these developments in a hundred different ways? These are the key questions of our epoch and they will not be raised, let alone answered, by a political party which accepts the right-wing advice that "it should slow down its tempo of reform, move nearer to the Conservatives, but claim that it could do the job [what job? J.R.C.] more efficiently and without the elements that make Conservatism unpleasant". The Labour Party with this message is evading the major problems of the century and dooming itself to defeat.

People who have grown up outside the orbit of the Labour movement cannot see on this basis any fundamental difference between the parties. To them the Labour "vision" and the Tory "vision" both involve the same feeble low grade tinkering with problems, while leaving their causes untouched. Continued enfeeblement of Labour's political appeal rather than changes in class structure are responsible for its set-backs, and more of the same policy, as the right wing recommends, will mean still more set-backs.

Who Makes Policy?

In the past the right wing has usually carried its policy at Labour Party Conferences because of the alliance between the right-wing leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the top trade union officials. When that alliance was flourishing any minority group which was in rebellion against right-wing policy was told that it was resisting decisions democratically arrived at at the Annual Conference and was accordingly disciplined.

Indeed the control of policy by the Annual Conference was one of the proud boasts of the Labour Party.

Mr. Attlee (now Lord Attlee) told the world in 1937 that:

"In contradistinction to Conservative conferences which simply pass resolutions that may or may not be acted upon, the Labour Party Conference lays down the policy of the Party and issues instructions which must be carried out by the Executive, the affiliated organisations and its representatives in Parliament and on local authorities. Conservative Conferences are generally more like demonstrations than Conferences. Leaders come down and make speeches, but they do not really depend on these gatherings to lay down lines of policy; far less do they feel bound in any way to follow them.

"The Labour Party Conference is in fact a par-

liament of the movement. It is more; it is a constituent assembly, because it has the power of altering its own Constitution."¹

When Mr. Aneurin Bevan asked the Labour Party Conference in 1957 not to renounce the hydrogen bomb he argued that otherwise it would be sending him, as a future Labour Foreign Secretary, "naked into the conference chamber". He did not doubt, and neither did anyone else at that time, that the Conference had the right to instruct the Parliamentary Labour Party and any future Labour government on the broad lines of its policy. Mr. Gaitskell says that Conferences can't bind the Parliamentary Party "on matters of detail", but even he dare not argue that the hydrogen bomb is a matter of detail.

It is this well established principle that is being challenged by the right-wing experts of the *Political Quarterly* and those in the wider movement that they are speaking for.

"What the Labour Party needs is a much smaller policy-making body than Conference, preferably the Parliamentary Committee [the so-called Shadow Cabinet] supported by the Parliamentary Labour Party, with Conference in the role of a critic and adviser, but not master," says the Editorial Introduction. "If only the Parliamentary leadership, acting for the Parliamentary Labour Party, were to insist on its absolute authority, granting persuasive authority to Conference decisions, but declining to recognise their binding effect, none of the present defects in the structure of the Party would really matter," says Mr. Yates.

Why rob Conference of its authority? Why rob the Labour Party of at least one thing that distinguishes it from the Tory Party? Because, says the editorial, the Labour Party as at present constituted "is totally incapable of coming to the sort of decisions a modern political party needs to take". Because, says Mr. Yates, "since the unions dominate both the Executive and Conference there is a built-in brake against change".

Yet it is certain that the right wing would never have regarded the question as being of desperate urgency had the Conference not been threatening to change Party policy on the hydrogen bomb and on nuclear strategy generally. The constituency Labour Parties and the unions are *for* change in relation to the bomb and *against* change in relation to dropping or watering down Clause 4. In short, they are responding to the wishes of their members and supporters.

The unions and the constituencies, the right wing says, have to provide the money and do

most of the work, but the vital policy has to be decided by a small Parliamentary caucus. This body the Conference can only advise.

A ridiculous policy

As a policy for making the Labour Party look ridiculous this is magnificent. Suppose on some vital question, like the H-bomb, the Parliamentary Party votes one way and the Conference another. The right wing picture the Parliamentary Party and the Conference amicably agreeing to differ. It could never happen that way, because a number of M.P.'s would agree with the Conference decision and would proceed to operate it. Is the National Executive Committee to expel such M.P.'s for supporting the decision of Conference rather than that of the Parliamentary caucus?

It is claimed that M.P.'s are better fitted to formulate policy because they are elected by the mass of the people, while the delegates to conferences are only elected by the Party members. This is only a half-truth, M.P.'s are elected as nominees of political parties; few of them would survive if their nomination were withdrawn, for the electorate is voting not for them but for their Party. The basic financial support of the Tory Party comes from the great monopolists, of the Labour Party from the organised working class. The electors who vote for these Parties expect them to see that the election programme is carried out, and see nothing strange in the Labour Party, in open Conference, deciding the policy on which it proposes to appeal to the electorate. Of course the Labour Party machine is subject to a great deal of management and is not as democratic as it seems. That, however, is an argument for preserving and extending such democracy as exists and for rejecting proposals to destroy it.

To defeat this wrecking policy the unity of all who believe in a socialist policy (Labour Party members and Communists alike) in the unions, the factories, the co-operatives and in the localities, is imperative. It is not enough merely to prevent the removal of Clause 4. An end must be put to the right-wing wreckers, with their support of the Cold War; their warm affection for predominantly capitalist economies; their rejection of the socialist transformation of society; their hatred for the remaining democratic aspects of the Labour Party; their thinly veiled contempt for the working-class membership. To defeat them utterly must be the aim of all who understand that the recovery of the Labour Party can only come about from an all-out attack against the Tories on the basis of a socialist policy.

¹ *The Labour Party in Perspective*, by C. A. R. Attlee, Gollancz, 1937, p. 93.

The Commonwealth Today

R. Palme Dutt

IN *The Crisis of Britain and the British Empire* I included a prefatory note on "Commonwealth and Empire". This note, as revised in the last edition (1957), brought the situation up to the time of writing. Since then further developments have taken place in this highly fluid situation. It may therefore be useful to examine the Commonwealth as it is today, and its relation to the Marxist-Leninist theory of imperialism.

In this connection the recent Commonwealth Premiers' Conference has highlighted the new questions which are arising. The Commonwealth Premiers' Conference which took place in May, and the sequel of the Conference, have brought sharply into the forefront of attention the deepening problems of British imperialism in relation to the advance of the national liberation movement all over the world.

This Conference was attended by the Premiers of ten States (in the case of South Africa, Foreign Secretary) constituting the States of the Commonwealth: Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, representing Britain and the older pre-1914 White Dominions ("White" in the case of South Africa, in the sense of the Government not of the population); and India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Ghana and Malaya, representing the newly independent States in Asia and Africa which have been constituted as independent States since the Second World War, together with the observer participation of the Premier of the Federation of the Rhodesias and Nyasaland, which is not so far an independent member State of the Commonwealth.

The Conference, which normally takes place at irregular intervals about every two years, sometimes more often (previously, 1946, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1953, 1955, 1956, 1957), took on a special significance this year for a number of reasons. It was the first Conference in which the number of representatives of the newly independent Afro-Asian states equalled the number from Britain and the older White Dominions. The prospect of the accession of additional African States and the West Indies in the immediate future raised questions of a developing shift in the balance of composition and the consequences arising therefrom. Second, the conflict over colour and racial discrimination reached extreme sharpness at the moment of the Conference through the crisis over the South African policy of Apartheid and the

Sharpeville massacre. This led to a public division nearly disrupting the Conference. Third, economic questions had also reached an acute point, especially over the issue of the European Common Market and the Commonwealth, and also in relation to the penetration of United States capital. Fourth, the Conference took place on the immediate eve of the Paris meeting of Heads of State, so that Premier Macmillan passed straight from the trials and strains of the Commonwealth Conference to the Summit fiasco.

1. What is the Commonwealth?

"The Commonwealth", as the formula is used today, is the relatively new term now officially used to describe the present latest stage of the British Empire. Historically the term "The Commonwealth" was the title of the First British Republic established by the seventeenth century democratic revolution. Thereafter the term fell into disfavour save among democratic writers, usually with left-wing and sometimes socialistic tendencies (the title chosen by William Morris for his socialist journal was "The Commonweal"). In British official circles up to the First World War the only recognised term was "The British Empire"; the King was the "King Emperor"; even the self-governing White Dominions were referred to collectively as "the Colonies"; and the Conferences with their Premiers were termed originally "Colonial Conferences", later "Imperial Conferences".

It was not until after the opening of the general crisis of imperialism, following the First World War and the victory of the October Revolution, that successive changes began. The effective full independence of the White Dominions was recognised by the 1926 Conference and the Statute of Westminster in 1931. The term "Commonwealth" began to be used to describe this association of Britain and the White Dominions, although in legal usage the term was defined to cover the entire range of "Britain and the British Dominions Overseas", including equally the White self-governing Dominions and the subject empire of India and the colonies, comprising six-sevenths of the whole. Thus the term "Commonwealth and Empire" began to be used as a supposed description of the two sections, the self-governing section and the subject section. In this way the Official Handbook issued by the British Government in

1946 was entitled "Handbook on the British Commonwealth and Empire". By 1959 the latest version has become "The Commonwealth in Brief".

It was after the Second World War and the sweeping victories of the national liberation movement over the world that the process of adaptation of the British imperialists, both in political technique and in terminology, became rapid. As Professor W. I. Jennings, joint author of *The Constitutional Law of the British Empire*, and the leading authority on Imperial Constitutional Law, explained in 1949 (*Times* 6.6.49):

"Empire was associated with 'imperialism' which was the deadliest of all political sins. The use of 'Commonwealth' made political conditions slightly less difficult."

However, in 1949, an official statement on behalf of the British Government (Premier Attlee in the House of Commons on May 2, 1949) still laid down that the three terms, "the Commonwealth, the British Commonwealth, or the British Empire" should be regarded as interchangeable and equally valid: "there has been no agreement to adopt or to exclude the use of any one of these terms." As late as 1952 *The Times* could still write in an editorial:

"The extension of the term Commonwealth . . . has blurred the edges of meaning . . . It would be more than a pity if the name of Empire were to be driven out" (15.1.52).

Today a far more advanced stage has been reached in the disintegration of the old forms of imperialism. In face of the strength of the national revolt in all territories, and the failure of the manifold colonial wars of the nineteen-fifties, most powerfully demonstrated in the fiasco of the Suez aggression, the British imperialists have had to concede the formation of politically independent states over nearly all the territories they formerly ruled, while retaining as much economic and strategic hold as they are able. The directly subject colonial empire is now reduced to 70 million, or one-ninth of the whole; and this will be still further reduced to less than one half this number, or under 6 per cent of the whole, in the immediate future with the establishment of the independence of the Nigerian Federation and later of the West Indies. The term "Empire" is now officially and finally abandoned, despite all the nostalgic lamentations of Sir Winston Churchill and *The Times*. On the very eve of this year's Commonwealth Premiers' Conference, that last stronghold of traditional Conservatism, the Primrose League (founded under the patronage of Disraeli, who first introduced the term "Empire" into official British usage), formally

deleted the term "the Empire" from its title and substituted "the Commonwealth". Even "the British Commonwealth" has had to go. What is left is "the Commonwealth".

The latest official definition of the Commonwealth in the Government Handbook *The Commonwealth in Brief* (1959) runs;

"The Commonwealth is an association of ten sovereign independent States—the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Ghana and the Federation of Malaya, together with their dependencies."

Here the colonial empire as a separate section has disappeared: there are only the independent sovereign States, and the subject colonies are classified with these as "dependencies" of the sovereign States, in fact almost entirely of the United Kingdom. On this basis the territory of the Commonwealth is computed at 11.9 million square miles, and the population at 650 million, roughly one quarter of the earth's surface and one quarter of the world's population.

2. What links the Commonwealth?

The Commonwealth thus comprises almost completely the same area and the same population as the old Empire. The only exceptions of any importance, which are now formally outside the Commonwealth, are Eire and Burma; and even with these in practice close ties of British imperialism are maintained, both with Eire, which remains economically in fact an agrarian hinterland of industrial Britain, with a backward economy and impoverished population, serving mainly as a source of supply of cattle and migrant cheap labour, and with Burma, where British assets in the plantations and raw materials continue considerable.

Hence it may be said that the Commonwealth today, while reflecting the manifest weakening of British imperialism, represents a significant measure of provisional success of the British imperialists in adapting themselves to the new conditions (the "winds of change", as Premier Macmillan has termed it in his recent speech to the South African parliament). For within the new political forms the economic and strategic hold of British imperialism remains considerable; and the technique of the "new colonialism" is actively pursued to extend that hold through the forms of "economic aid", "developing projects", strategic agreements and the establishment of bases.

What holds together the existing States of the Commonwealth after they have established their political independence? The old conventional formulas originally offered by the early propa-

gandists of empire, like Seeley's *Expansion of England*, which spoke of community of race, "a great homogeneous people, one in blood, language, religion and laws, dispersed over a boundless space", "the destiny of Anglo-Saxondom", have long lost their application. There is neither community of blood, language, religion or culture. Previously the bond of unity used to be presented as the common link of the Crown. But India, Pakistan and Ghana, are now Republics, Ceylon has announced the intention to become a Republic, and Malaya is established under its own local sovereign. Failing other links, the alternative has been presented as identity of political parliamentary institutions, "a common political language . . . a broadly similar pattern of institutions, whether legislative, executive or judicial" (*The Commonwealth in Brief*, 1959). But that line of argument has also broken down since Pakistan became a military dictatorship, not to mention the actual character of South Africa as a semi-fascist police state. So the final current formula is to speak of a "mystic" of association not susceptible of other explanation than the fact of association.

However, the actual link is not so mysterious or insubstantial. The decisive link of the Commonwealth, as of the old Empire, is British finance capital. The traditional range of operations of British finance capital in the countries of the old Empire is carried forward in the countries of the Commonwealth. Very nearly one half of Britain's trade is conducted with countries of the Commonwealth. The lion's share of foreign capital assets and investments in all the countries of the Commonwealth (with the exception of Canada, where the United States dominates) is held by Britain. The sterling area, including all the Commonwealth countries except Canada, makes Britain the centre of the international financial and commercial transactions of the Commonwealth countries, with all the rich pickings for the City derived therefrom. The dollar earnings of Malaya, Ghana or Nigeria have helped to cover the dollar deficit of Britain. It may be noted that the sterling area also includes countries which formally left the Commonwealth, like Eire and Burma, but which remain within the net of British imperialism. Similarly Jordan, Libya and the "protected states" in the Persian Gulf are in the sterling area. Of the overseas sterling balances held in London, amounting to £3,912 million in 1957, two thirds, or £2,699 million, were from Commonwealth countries, nearly one half of this, or £1,269 million, being from the subject colonies of Britain. Thus the Empire, alias Commonwealth, is still very much the foundation of Britain's economy.

Strategically also the links remain close. Through

the Commonwealth Britain is able to maintain its ring of overseas bases round the world, although the resistance of the national liberation movement compels continual shifts and adjustments. Thus the Canal Zone base had to be transferred to Cyprus, where the conflict over the base delayed implementation of the Zurich agreement, and concentration is now being transferred to Kenya, with new conflicts looming there. Similarly the enforced evacuation from Trincomalee in Ceylon led to the establishment of the base in Gen in the Maldive Islands as the alternative, with resulting new troubles arising there.

Close strategic co-operation in training, personnel, organisation and arms equipment is maintained between the countries of the Commonwealth, again with Britain as the decisive centre and leader. The British Chief of the Imperial General Staff holds an annual conference attended by Army Chiefs of all the Commonwealth countries. Permanent United Kingdom Service liaison staffs are maintained in the overseas Commonwealth countries and vice-versa. The Imperial Defence College, Joint Services College and Royal Air Force Colleges in Britain are all attended by officers from the other Commonwealth countries.

At the same time there are special economic inducements and advantages maintained by Britain to induce the ruling circles of the newly independent countries to continue attached to the Commonwealth. Thus the system of Imperial preference ensures advantages for the food and raw materials of the primary producing Commonwealth countries in the British market. Similarly, for the raising of capital, Government support is able to ensure more favourable terms for loans of Commonwealth countries raised in London. In addition, special networks have been built up through the Colonial Development Corporation, and more recently, the Commonwealth Development Finance Company, set up in 1953.

Over and above these direct organisational links, there are further close ties in practice; economic, social and political between the new ruling upper class elements to whom, at a certain stage of national revolt outstripping the possibilities of forcible suppression, power has been handed over by Britain in the newly independent countries. In the majority of the newly independent countries the new rulers are the representatives of the national bourgeoisie, the bigger capitalists and traders (in an economically more advanced country like India, big monopolists), who have played a certain vacillating national role in utilising the mass struggle to win their own position against the domination of imperialism, but who have at the same time very close links, both of interlocking

business interests, and of a British-trained educational, social and cultural background, with the British ruling class.

In the political and strategic field this takes on the character of a conscious common interest against the fear of a mass popular revolution or communism, which they see as threatening the end of their privileged position. Thus underlying the atmosphere of "sympathetic mutual understanding" and "friendly co-operation" described as characterising these conferences of the Premiers from the divers Commonwealth countries lies the common ground of anti-Communism, which in the last analysis draws together, despite contradictions, the varied trends represented by a Nehru or a Macmillan, a Nkrumah or a Menzies, an Ayub Khan or a Diefenbaker, or even Verwoerd, however much the others may deplore the latter's tactical methods of a racist programme for "suppressing communism".

3. Increasing Contradictions of the Commonwealth

These links of economic, social, political and strategic common interests which still hold together the ruling classes of Britain and the Commonwealth countries in the loose association of the Commonwealth do not rule out the existence and growth of contradictions of interests which increasingly strain the links.

In the case of the older White Dominions the direct conflict of economic interests has long been evident, and indeed gave rise to the eighteenth century War of Independence of the United States, which represented the first breach in the British colonial system and was followed by the Canadian Revolt of 1837. In the modern era since the turn of the century the determination of the bourgeoisie of Canada, Australia and South Africa to carry forward their own industrial development has come into conflict with the interests of the British industrialists, who have sought to see in these countries primary producing territories for the supply of food and raw materials and markets for British industrial goods. This conflict, which found expression in the establishment of the successive stages of economic and political independence, culminating in the Statute of Westminster in 1931, has found further expression in the increasing trend towards the United States as the source of capital and industrial supplier, steadily reducing Britain's former privileged position in these countries.

In the case of the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa, reaching their formation as independent states only recently in the course of intense anti-imperialist struggle, this contradiction

has been and continues much greater. These countries were not countries occupied (after extermination of the original inhabitants) by settler off-shoots of the British bourgeoisie. They were conquered subject colonial countries, peoples invaded and subjugated by the British imperialists, with retarded colonial economies and prevention of industrial development. Despite the existence of common links, and some common class interests against the popular masses, the developing interests of the emergent national bourgeoisie reveal increasing contradictions with those of imperialism. Their urgent task becomes the task of economic reconstruction and industrialisation. It is true that the national bourgeoisie, usually linked with the old land system and landlordism, is unable to carry through the basic agrarian revolution indispensable in order to break the old colonial economy and create the conditions for successful industrialisation. Hence their efforts are half-hearted and fall far short of the needs and possibilities (as in the Indian five-year plans). But the conflict of interests is visible. Imperialism warns against "over-ambitious" plans of industrial development, and seeks to canalise "aid" in such a way as to continue to concentrate their role as primary producing countries. (World Bank Report on Indian Third Five Year Plan). Under these circumstances the national bourgeoisie in these countries begins to look towards alternative sources of effective aid for real reconstruction now available from the socialist world.

The existence of the socialist third of the world is the decisive new factor in the present development of the newly independent states in Asia and Africa. On this basis it has become possible for these countries, though in themselves weak, to enter on a course independent of imperialism and even against its wishes. Following the victory of the Chinese Revolution, India began to develop an independent foreign policy, played an important role in facilitating the negotiation of the armistice agreements in Korea and Viet Nam, and over the Suez war came out in direct opposition to the aggression of British imperialism. Socialist economic aid has not only powerfully assisted industrial development, but has forced the imperialists to attempt a belated imitation, as in the case of the Indian steel mills.

In the new world situation of the balance between socialism and imperialism it has become possible for the newly independent countries to build up close relations along their own path of "non-commitment" or "positive neutrality", aimed to maintain friendship with socialist and capitalist countries alike and support the aims of peaceful co-existence. The first Conference of Afro-Asian

States at Bandung in 1955 was a very significant indication of this new trend in world politics. Although in fact a minority of Asian States by no means accept the principles of "non-commitment", but are entangled in the sectional military alliances organised by imperialism to disrupt the anti-imperialist front and maintain Western domination in new forms, such as Cento and Seato, nevertheless the conception of Afro-Asian co-operation for peace along the lines of a policy independent from imperialism has exercised an important influence, and the grouping of Afro-Asian States in the United Nations has been able to play a significant part. On the popular level the successive Conferences of Afro-Asian People's Solidarity have further carried forward this development.

Hence the continuing participation of the newly independent Asian and African States, which were formerly under British rule, in the present stage of the form of association of the Commonwealth should not be seen in isolation as the sole or even decisive form of international participation or grouping of these States even in the current transitional phase. While there are still important links, as indicated, attaching these Governments to the Commonwealth, they are simultaneously participating in other forms of international association, such as the grouping of Afro-Asian States, separately from the Commonwealth. The former, representing the past, may be declining in strength, while the latter, corresponding to the new rising forces of the national liberation movement, may be advancing. For the two forms of association are by no means necessarily always in harmony or compatible. This was already shown sharply at the time of the Suez War, when all the Afro-Asian States with India playing a leading part, were opposed to the aggression of British and French imperialism and cast hostile votes in the United Nations Assembly. The Commonwealth was publicly split, and the ties of Afro-Asian solidarity against imperialism proved stronger. A new example of the same type of basic conflict arose this year over the South African Government's policy of Apartheid or White Supremacy and colour bar suppression, which nearly disrupted the Commonwealth Premiers' Conference.

4. Conflict over South Africa and Apartheid

The issue of the South African Apartheid regime of racial oppression in the interests of White domination, the Sharpeville massacre and the following Emergency reign of terror dominated in fact the proceedings of the Commonwealth Premiers' Conference, despite all the attempts of the British Prime Minister, supported by the other White Prime Ministers, to keep the

issue off the agenda. International opinion had been outraged by the Sharpeville massacre. The Afro-Asian Premiers, especially those from the more recently formed States, Malaya and Ghana, came mandated by their Cabinets or Assemblies to press the issue and demand an explicit condemnation of Apartheid as incompatible with the principles of the Commonwealth. Even those with the most reactionary internal regime, such as Pakistan or Malaya, were committed to fight on this issue, and were even in some respects the most vociferous in proclaiming their determination to fight on it, possibly welcoming the opportunity to find at any rate one issue on which they could rebut the popular charge of being tied to imperialism.

For the British imperialists, however, and in varying degree for the other White Premiers, the issue raised the most embarrassing dilemmas. On the one hand, they could not afford to outrage the feelings of the Afro-Asian majority of the population of their Commonwealth by appearing openly to condone the unconcealed and barbarous system of racial colour bar servitude practised in South Africa. On the other hand, they had no wish to lose South Africa, in which the British finance-capitalists have £865 million invested, bringing rich profits from the slavery of Apartheid. Already in his tour of Africa, including South Africa, immediately preceding the Conference, Premier Macmillan had endeavoured to bridge the unbridgeable and combine benevolent words towards African aspirations with close practical solidarity with the White oppressors and advocates of racial supremacy. In South Africa he had sought to satisfy his hosts, the Verwoerd Government, by refusing to meet African leaders and by denouncing the international boycott of South African goods, while at the same time in his speech to the parliament at Capetown on February 3 he warned of the necessity to adapt to the "winds of change" sweeping over Africa and inserted a diplomatically worded hint on the dangers of maintaining a too rigid policy of racial suppression in the modern world. In vain. His words only aroused the anger of his hosts without affecting their policy. The Sharpeville and Langa massacre, killing seventy, shot dead by police firing on an unarmed crowd trying to run away (mostly shot in the back), followed within three weeks of Macmillan's Capetown speech.

Hence all the endeavours of Macmillan at the Commonwealth Conference were to keep out the explosive issue of South Africa. The question, it was alleged, was purely one of "internal" "domestic" policy of South Africa, and therefore

ineligible for inclusion as an item into the Conference agenda. An untenable argument. For the United Nations Assembly had already thirteen times condemned the South African system of Apartheid as a violation of human rights under the Charter, and on the last occasion the only opposing votes had been those of Britain, France and fascist Portugal. When discussion became inevitable, it was ruled that any discussion should be an informal exchange outside the agenda or official proceedings and should be strictly private. Once again reality tore down the curtain of concealment. After the South African Foreign Minister Louw had given an outrageous press conference, arrogantly defending Apartheid in the most extreme and uncompromising terms, the Premiers of Ghana and Malaya indignantly demanded equal publicity for their views. The South African question became the main issue of the Conference reported in the press.

In the final outcome the traditional device of a "black-white" formula was devised for the communiqué to cover the rift. The formula satisfied Verwoerd by not condemning Apartheid, and by emphasising non-intervention in the "internal affairs" of member states. At the same time it made meagre concessions to the critics by stating that the points of view had been explained, that the future membership of South Africa in the Commonwealth after becoming a Republic would have to be subject to the agreement of the other members, and by adding a final key sentence on the "multi-racial" character of the Commonwealth:

"The Ministers emphasised that the Commonwealth itself is a multi-racial association and expressed the need to ensure good relations between all member states and peoples of the Commonwealth."

Even this seemingly innocuous formula was a monument of hypocrisy. The real world of imperialism contradicts its smooth phrases at every point, and not only in South Africa. Under cover of the "multi-racial" phrases Premier Welensky operates an essentially similar system of racial suppression in Southern Rhodesia as in South Africa. The massacre by police shooting in Nyasaland (a "police state", according to the Devlin Report) immediately preceded that in Sharpeville. From Uganda to Bermuda the colour bar is maintained. Premier Menzies of "White Australia" excludes coloured immigrants and solemnly signs the declaration repudiating racial discrimination. The agony of Notting Hill cries in vain in Britain, and the sanctimonious British Government signed the declaration repudiating racial discrimination immediately after refusing to ratify the Inter-

national Labour Office convention condemning discrimination in the choice of jobs on grounds of colour or creed. Even in the standard official photograph of the Commonwealth Premiers in the garden of No. 10 Downing Street, reproduced in every newspaper, the five White Premiers were firmly seated in a phalanx in the centre, with the five coloured Premiers (including Nehru) relegated to the outer edges.

The "innocuous words" of the Conference formula, as *The Times* described it, could solve nothing. "A precarious balance" was the verdict of the *Daily Telegraph* on the outcome of the Conference. "Never before has so large a crack been papered over so thinly," commented the *Guardian*. "This is not a schism that can be healed with comfortable words," warned *The Times*.

The Afro-Asian Premiers did not conceal their fury. The more clamorous among them had only been manoeuvred by the astute Macmillan into signing the declaration, thus ranging their signatures alongside the signatures of the hated racist Louw, by allowing themselves to be impressed with the solemn humbug that the rule of unanimity had to be obeyed. The Malayan Premier Abdul Rahman (by no means a representative of the left) in an immediately following public statement revealed his mortification and his anxiety lest he should be accused of betrayal:

"No Prime Minister will keep his mouth shut when he gets home. I shall express myself fully when I get back to Malaya. Otherwise what will my people think of me? They would think from reading the communiqué that I have let them down."

Similar angry statements were made by President Ayub Khan of Pakistan (also no representative of the left) and Premier Nkrumah of Ghana.

Subsequently to the Conference, Ghana has announced an official decision to begin a boycott of South African goods. The eleven independent African Governments, meeting at Addis Ababa in June, have agreed to establish a similar boycott. Malaya has also announced a boycott on South African goods and an embargo on the supply of rubber and tin to South Africa. The Afro-Asian Governments in the United Nations are understood to have under consideration a resolution recommending economic sanctions against South Africa so long as the system of Apartheid is maintained. Such a resolution would place the Macmillian Government, with its attempted two-faced policy, in an embarrassing position. The way is open for the intensified pressure of British popular opinion.

Thus the battle within the Commonwealth continues to develop.

Many other issues arose in the proceedings of the Commonwealth Premiers' Conference this year which would require fuller separate examination, and which have an important bearing on the future of the Commonwealth.

5. Economic and Strategic Questions

In the economic sphere the main issues turned on the European Common Market and its relation to the Commonwealth, and on the source of the flow of capital for development in the under-developed Commonwealth areas, especially Africa.

In relation to the European Common Market the communiqué contented itself with an innocuous formula of "concern at the prospect of any economic division of Europe" and the "hope" that the new plans would "avoid damage" to the Commonwealth countries and that "these problems could be speedily and satisfactorily resolved, with due regard to the interests of countries outside Europe". No policy was set out, nor could it easily be set out. For Britain to enter the Common Market, with its avowed aim of eventual complete economic-political integration, would mean to say a final farewell to its dreams of world power as the centre of Commonwealth, and to become no more than a constituent State in a West European combination dominated by West Germany. On the other hand, to fail to enter could mean to reduce Britain to increasing economic inferiority and failure in face of the two giants of the capitalist world, the United States and the Common Market, alongside the socialist world. Nor could the phantasies of Commonwealth economic integration offer any practical alternative, since experience had long shown the lack of basis for these old phantasies of the imperialists (the long dead plans of "Imperial Economic Federation", or "Empire Customs Union" or "Empire Free Trade"). The issue was left undecided. But after the Commonwealth Conference, and after the Summit fiasco, Britain has opened new initiatives towards attempting to reach an agreement with the Common Market. Influential organs such as the *Economist* and *Observer* have advocated complete entry. On the other hand, it is pointed out that two fifths of Britain's exports go to the Commonwealth and only one seventh to the Common Market countries. The issue still remains undecided. The increasing urgency of the question of the Common Market reveals the further weakening of the basis of the Commonwealth.

On the supply of capital the Achilles' heel of Britain's domination of the Commonwealth was revealed. The recurring problems of Britain's balance of payments, and the overwhelming

superior strength of the United States as an exporter of capital, have combined to place in jeopardy Britain's key position at the centre of the empire, since the maintenance of that position depends on the ability to maintain and renew continuously the export of capital. In this sphere Britain has had steadily to lose positions to the United States, with a surrender of dominance in Canada, a marked shrinking of the old superiority in Australia, and a significant increase of United States penetration in India and Africa. All the internal economics and politics of post-war Governments in Britain whether Labour or Conservative, have in fact revolved around this central aim: to force up the export of capital in order to maintain the empire. The communiqué of the Conference recorded that proposals were considered for "co-operative action among members of the Commonwealth in assisting the economic development of Commonwealth countries in Africa which have recently attained or are approaching independence." i.e., to seek to draw in the now developing Canadian and Australian finance-capital to reinforce Britain for the further exploitation of Africa.

In the strategic field also important questions are arising, and the silence of the communiqué by no means indicates that these questions were not discussed. For it is precisely at this moment that the collapse of Britain's nuclear strategy based on Blue Streak and the Thors, that is, based on vulnerable fixed missile sites in Britain, has led to the new strategy of dispersal, to seek to keep the bombers constantly mobile from a ring of bases round the world. The fulfilment of this so-called "imperial defence system" would require the continuous operation of the manned bombers from "forward bases" in the Mediterranean, Africa, the Middle East and Indian Ocean, and the Far East. The key points of such a chain of airfields would be represented by Cyprus, Kenya, the Central African Federation, Aden, the Maldives and Singapore. Hence, just as Britain's naval supremacy in the old days rested on possession of the chain of naval bases round the world, so Britain's nuclear strategy today requires domination of the chain of air bases in the Commonwealth countries round the world.

But it is precisely these bases that give rise to especially sharp conflict with the national consciousness and demands for independence in the countries concerned. During these years since the war Britain has had to evacuate base after base in the old dependent empire or newly independent countries, in face of the overwhelming demand of the national movement and hostility of the local population, after the expenditure of vast sums on

their installation and equipment. What happened to the old Suez Canal Zone base? Or Habbaniyah? Or Trincomalee? Will a different fate await the bases in Cyprus? Or Kenya? Or Aden? Or Singapore? Once again the deepening contradictions of the present precarious Commonwealth structure are revealed.

6. Queries on the future of the Commonwealth

Around the Commonwealth Premiers' Conference a widespread discussion has developed on the future of the Commonwealth. The immediate issue of this discussion has turned on the future of its political structure. The further extension of current policy would bring the accession of a further series of newly independent countries, some larger such as Nigeria (33 million), some smaller such as the West Indies (3½ million), some considerably smaller, such as Sierra Leone, Malta, Cyprus, Singapore. All these as sovereign States, if continuing in the Conference, would have equal rights to participate on an equal basis in future Commonwealth Premiers' Conferences, thus swamping the original members. The Conference would become "expanded into a debating society of a score of delegations". (*Times* 27.4.60). A recent House of Lords' debate in July revealed the anxieties over this prospect.

The intensity of the debate on this prospect did not only turn on the question of expanding numbers, although formally this was the only problem that was brought into public discussion. We have seen that in the Conference this year for the first time the number of Afro-Asian Premiers equalled the number of White Premiers from pre-1914 members. We have also seen that the sharp conflict arising over the system of colour discrimination, as practised in South Africa, nearly disrupted the Conference. With the prospective further expansion of numbers, unless new methods should be devised, the Afro-Asian Premiers of newly independent countries would be in a majority, and the decisive domination of the British imperialists and their close allies, utilising the Commonwealth structure, could be thrown into doubt.

Many propositions were canvassed in the public discussion around this issue. The first proposals put forward, for "two tiers" of membership, with a distinction between senior, larger, more important members, and junior, smaller, minor members, were soon dismissed as obviously undiplomatic in the delicate situation arising. Alternative proposals have been put forward for a "steering committee" with a core of permanent members and a rotating panel of elected or representative members from

regions, on the model of the United Nations Security Council. The Conservative Political Centre's newly published booklet *Wind of Change: The Challenge of the Commonwealth* advocates a series of "functional committees". In the Conference communiqué the question of the future "constitutional development of the Commonwealth" was mentioned as having been held over for further "study".

This discussion is symptomatic of the many question marks recognised by the imperialists themselves as arising over the future of the Commonwealth. On the eve of the Conference *The Times* published a series of editorials on the problem arising, and the first was entitled "Anxieties" (27.4.60). The picture drawn was gloomy:

"Every meeting of the Prime Ministers—indeed every Imperial Conference in earlier days—has found the Commonwealth a little more loosely articulated. . . .

The argument that the Commonwealth is moving down a slippery slope to dissolution is formidable . . . No Member, happily, has gone over to the adversary, but the possibility is not unthinkable . . . The Crown is rejected by these peoples (of Asia and Africa) as something irrelevant and alien. Even Australians, loyal and forthright, find themselves leaning more towards the United States. . . .

Many marks of the old imperial unity have dissolved away. Strategically it happened long ago . . . The task of policing the world has largely been handed over to regional associations, in which member States of the Commonwealth participate individually, but the collective voice is not heard: The interchangeable citizenship, once the glory of the Empire, has disappeared."

The solution offered in the final article is hardly convincing (29.4.60):

"It is easy to suggest schemes for tighter organisation. The truth is that the Commonwealth has to be accepted as the varied and voluntary organisation that it is. . . . Reforms can only be gradual and marginal."

Underlying these doubts and uncertainties of the imperialists on the future of the Commonwealth is revealed their deeper fear which governs their approach. This is their fear that all the manoeuvres may in the end fail them, and that the former subject peoples of the Empire, who by their revolt have already won the recognition of their independent states, although they are still heavily under the economic and strategic yoke of imperialism, still suffering from the inheritance of a colonial economy, still paying rich dividends to the financiers in London, may refuse to accept the present halfway stage, and may continue their revolt and advance to complete economic and political independence from imperialism, or . . . as the im-

perialists define it . . . to Communism. Here is the spectre which haunts them, which drives them to make concessions, to acclaim the national aspirations which formerly they crushed, or to repudiate the colour bar and racial discrimination of which they were most zealous upholders. The spectre still haunts them.

In the review of the Commonwealth by *The Times* quoted above the view is put forward that the granting of national independence was "a gamble" in the hope of defeating Communism:

"There has always been present the fear that national sentiment, if unsatisfied in the Commonwealth, may be taken under alien and Communist patronage. In the trust that, when uncontrolled, it will be less likely to seek such affiliation there is something of a gamble".

The Canadian Premier Diefenbaker declared during the Commonwealth Premiers' Conference that the declaration of the equality of races in the Commonwealth was indispensable in order that the Commonwealth should fulfil its function as "a bulwark against communism:"

"A major principle of the Commonwealth must continue to be the equality of all races and peoples in all parts of the Commonwealth. Unless we accept that as a basic principle, everywhere in the world, the Commonwealth mission will ultimately be greatly diminished".

Truly the fear of Communism is the beginning of wisdom even for the most hard-boiled imperialists.

"A bulwark against Communism." Such is the imperialist conception of the Commonwealth. Through all the changing forms, with infinite flexibility and capacity for manoeuvre, they hope still to keep flowing the tide of surplus profit to maintain the British "affluent" paradise. But the wheel of history cannot be turned backwards. The manifest strains and unsolved dilemmas of the recent Commonwealth Premiers' Conference have demonstrated the deepening crisis of imperialism.

The real question is not one of forms, but of content; not of labels, but of living and concrete economic, social and political relations.

It would be idle to assume that some forms of the Commonwealth may not continue into the next stage (for example, the association of Britain, Australia, New Zealand and possibly Canada, on grounds of historical, racial and cultural associations) as to assume that the artificial frontiers carved out by predatory imperialists will govern the political forms of the future, or that the peoples of West Africa or Africa will not fulfil their dream of closer political association, irrespective of previous imperialist frontiers, or similarly the peoples of the Arab world, or of the Caribbean or of South East Asia. At the present moment such anticipations can only be speculations of the future. The revision of the Communist Parties' formulation on future fraternal relations of the victorious British working class with the newly independent nations, following solidarity in the common anti-imperialist struggle, adopted at our 25th Congress, has helped to prepare the Party in readiness for the widening variety of prospects now opening out.

But the present reality is still the struggle against imperialism. The present essential necessity is the fraternal fighting alliance of all the peoples in the present Commonwealth against imperialism and against the policies of imperialism; against colonial wars, national oppression and imperialist military pacts; against racial and colour discrimination, economic exploitation, and denial of democratic rights; for the right of self-determination of all peoples; for economic liberation; for disarmament and peaceful co-existence. What is certain is that, despite all the skilful manoeuvres to juggle with forms and phrases to deceive the people, imperialism is doomed. What is certain is that, through whatever forms and stages, the peoples will advance to the final and complete victory of their economic, social and political liberation.

The Sociology of Knowledge

John Lewis

ONE of the fundamental theories of Marxism asserts that on the basis of social organisation, of what are called the relations of production, we find institutions and ideas, ethical and cultural systems, derived from the social structure, the function of which is to support that system. Every society is a structurally inter-related cultural whole, consequently no material or ideal aspect of that whole, whether it be its legal code, methods of manufacture, educational practices, religion or art, can be understood as an isolated phenomenon. It must be taken in relation to the way in which the system functions as a whole. In other words the forms of man's social being determine the forms of his consciousness.

In a rather similar way, ideas arise, under certain historical conditions and among certain social groups, violently antagonistic to those which support the existing order, ideas which in due course help to bring into existence new institutions, a new legal system, a new morality, new forms of art. All these play a creative role in history and are identified with living and growing social forces.

Thus ideas are powerful in history in two ways. They can add strength and resisting power to groups and classes which are threatened by the development of the forces of production. That is their negative and obstructive role, in which they serve as the allies of the established order. But they can also lend consciousness and attacking power to the rival groups and classes which the development of the forces of production has called into being; and this is the constructive role of ideas in history, without which history cannot possibly move forward.

Max Weber and Karl Mannheim

This theory as to the nature and function of ideas is known as the Sociology of Knowledge and has taken other forms than that found in Marx. This has been due partly to the fact that somewhat similar views have been worked out by other thinkers, but more particularly to the influence of Marxism on certain later philosophers, resulting in a fusion of Marxist and non-Marxist elements. Perhaps the two most important sociologists who have advanced views of this kind were Max Weber and Karl Mannheim. Max Weber's theories have found able

expression in R. H. Tawney's important book, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*; Mannheim, who came to England in 1933, and became a leading influence at the London School of Economics, until his death in 1947, had written an important book, *Ideology and Utopia* and, more recently, an important volume of Mannheim's essays has been published entitled *Essays in the Sociology of Knowledge*, in the International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction, edited by Paul Kecskemeti.

Recently a comprehensive study of the whole movement, by Dr. W. Stark, has appeared, entitled *The Sociology of Knowledge*¹ which deals comprehensively with the views of Marx, Vico, Weber, Mannheim and many others, and proceeds to formulate, and later to offer a solution of the difficulties raised by the social determination of thought. The Sociology of Knowledge as it appears in these writers is a doctrine which has taken some of the most influential ideas in the modern world and brought them together in a single framework. It reflects the views of all those who have stressed the unconscious drives and partisan interests that lie behind men's ideas. It is part of the whole trend in modern thinking which has replaced the notion of mind as a pure and disembodied thing with a conception of intelligence as something practical and creative, a tool by which a living creature adapts himself to a changing environment and a developing social structure.

The Rejection of Absolutism

This doctrine, especially in its Marxian form, rejects not only the absolutist principles and timeless values of the medieval world and of transcendental metaphysics, but also the later view which placed its reliance upon Reason as something static and detached, completely lifted above human interests and conflicts. The more critical view saw that all values and principles were rooted in time and place, and that ideas cannot be studied in isolation from the society in which they are born and flourish. In other words, political and economic theory must be closely wedded to sociology.

Marxism has its own special contribution to

¹ *The Sociology of Knowledge*, by W. Stark (Routledge & Kegan Paul), 36s.

this theory, which is rejected by Mannheim. It relates ideology directly to the situation, standpoint and interests of *social classes*, and especially social classes in conflict, but it goes further, and identifies the class interest of the proletariat with the interests of society as a whole, and rejects the complete relativism of Mannheim.

Historicism

This whole approach, both in its Marxist and non-Marxist form, may be termed *historicism*; that is to say it considers the history of the world as in a process of necessary development, therefore it is only by keeping step with the movement of history, by adopting ideas that are required for the next stage in the development of man, that we can influence the course of events. Instead, therefore, of proposing that we escape from history and give our loyal adherence to the unchanging and the eternal, historicism shows us that we must immerse ourselves completely in the flow, we must find our social ideals and moral standards for ourselves on the basis of our needs in the actual historical situation, for human ideas are not descriptions of an independent reality, they are *strategies for staying alive*.

There is no truth that stands above historical change and circumstance. Where any such claims are made, we may be sure that they represent nothing more than an ideological device to perpetuate the *status quo* and preserve sectional interests, so that "law, morality, religion are so many bourgeois prejudices, behind which lurk in ambush just as many bourgeois interests".²

Objections Considered

The sociology of knowledge both as a general theory and in its particular forms raises many difficulties. These are of two kinds: (a) Is historicism determinist? (b) Are ideas purely relative, so that the notion of "truth" disappears?

(a) Determinism

Certain forms of historicism certainly regard social development as proceeding irresistibly and inevitably to its goal, so that all man's ideas and actions are necessitated and he can do nothing to control, change, or expedite the flow of events.

This view is frequently attributed to Marx, but without foundation. Marxists believe that the ideas derived from society themselves become the force that carries society forward. They are therefore indispensable. There is thus reciprocal inter-action between base and superstructure.

Secondly, it is frequently supposed that Marxism lays exclusive emphasis upon *economic*

motives, asserting that the only driving force in history is conscious self-interest. This view is bound up with the theory that the course of development is determined solely by the mechanical development of technology, i.e. of the economic basis.

But *Marxism repudiates economic determinism*; neither does it believe that the ideas which play a creative role in history are those directly expressing self-interest.

In the first place we need to distinguish clearly between the methods by which social man satisfies his needs, which depend on the technical level of development, and what social forms develop on this basis. The fact that these forms of social life are dependent upon the technological basis does not mean that they can be reduced to this basis, that they are "nothing but" that on which they depend.

This would be a narrow mechanical, abstract way of thinking. The fact that all mental activity is dependent on the activity of the brain cells does not *reduce* all mental activity, not only in everyday life but in science, art, literature and morals, to bio-chemical processes. Although mind depends on brain processes it has its own independent functions and enables the organism to act upon the material world in new ways. Similarly, the forms of social organisation themselves become a determining factor, although they have come into existence as those appropriate to a particular method of production; while the legal and moral and other ideological forces, which arise out of these social relations, also become actual forces profoundly influencing the social structure.

Thus the motives driving men are not economic, but moral, religious, or political. This is not invalidated by showing that even so they correspond with and express the interests of the classes concerned. The Royalists may well have fought passionately for the "Divine Right of Kings" and other similar ideals, which they held most sincerely, but in doing so they were defending their class interests. It would not have been possible for the Royalists as a class to adopt and fight for Locke's theory of constitutional government, which was contrary to their class interests, or for the rising bourgeoisie, as a class, to be swept off their feet by Royalist ideals and to fight for Charles I against their own class interests.

(b) Relativism

Now just as there are forms of historicism that are deterministic, so there are sociologies of knowledge that are relativistic.

It is frequently urged against both Marxism and other forms of the sociology of knowledge

² Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*.

that if all ideas reflect the special conditions under which they arise, then every notion of truth and objectivity disappears. In ethics, too, this would reduce moral values to merely individual or sectional interest since we can no longer accept absolute and authoritative moral principles.

This need not be so, and is by no means involved in the theory as such. Marxism entirely escapes relativism.

There is a double fallacy here: some assert that what is not absolute in a metaphysical sense can have no more validity than a personal desire or interest. They conclude that either all morality is mere self-interest, and therefore not morality at all, or that, if we believe in moral values, we must become absolutists and look for some deity or eternal principle of Ethics or Reason to give them validity.

Relativism Compatible with Absolutism

This whole line of reasoning is wrong.

Relativism is perfectly compatible with objective truth, objective morality, and a very real form of absolutism that entirely avoids metaphysics or supernaturalism.³

- (i) In the first place there is a great deal of everyday thinking as well as scientific thinking that is sufficiently independent of ideological distortion to be regarded as true in a perfectly objective sense.
- (ii) But even scientific thinking *can* be distorted or obstructed by class bias, as Darwinism was twisted into a defence of a competitive economy on the grounds of "the survival of the fittest".
- (iii) All science is relativistic in two senses:
 - (a) It is obviously partial and incomplete, true as far as it goes, but not final.
 - (b) Scientific thinking is closely related to and limited by the stage of technological development and social practice. Thus discoveries in mechanics, astronomy, physics and chemistry were both stimulated and limited by the special needs (navigation, trade, manufacture) of the periods in which they were made. But science, none the less, reveals genuine aspects of the objective world—to be genuine is not to be final or complete.

³ This has nowhere been more convincingly argued than in Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio Criticism*.

Relativity and Morals

With regard to morals, it is surely clear that it is because morality is always and in all places relative to circumstances, that it is binding in any time and in any place. Morality *must* be relative. *Because* it is relevant to the actual situation its commands have an absolute quality. It is thus absolutely right, under certain circumstances, to protest or revolt; or under other circumstances to be loyal and disciplined. Thus, as with scientific truth, we do not have to choose between the absolute and the relative. Truth and morals are both relative and absolute, they are *correct* in the circumstances, at the particular time, in the framework of enquiry as it is then being pursued.

Class Morality

An even more urgent problem is raised by the class bias of ideologies, especially by the moral imperatives which motivate classes. Is a class ideology only a class ideology, or have we some means of judging its objective, its absolute value?

Now Mannheim, and many other critics, reproach Marx with regarding all ideologies *other than his own* as relative, Marxism itself claiming to be exempt from ideological bias, not partial, not distorted, not a false consciousness, but *true*. But, it is objected, the notion of ideology cannot be used in this way just as a polemical weapon for disparaging the ideas of one's opponents. On the other hand, if Marxism itself is an ideology, representing only a sectional bias, it has no absolute validity, unless, like Thrasy-machus in Plato's Republic, the only criterion of right is what prevails, in which case if the Marxists win, then Marxism is right because they have won, and for as long as they hold power.

Marxism neither makes the childish error of exempting its own theories from sociological influence, nor does it claim that socialism is true only because it is bound to win. The Marxist position is perfectly clear and quite simple. The revolutionary working class has an ideology that arises out of its special position in society, and out of the historical situation at a critical juncture. But while limited and relative, it is also true. Its analysis of class structure, of crisis, of political possibilities, of working class opportunity, is objectively correct, while the formulations of the capitalist class are incorrect, because ideological passions prevent this class from solving the problems of modern society rationally.

Deep personal interest in survival and the betterment of life for all men is a powerful incentive to radical thinking, just as the horrors of cancer determine our energetic efforts to find a

cause and cure. Passion *may* blind, but it may be a powerful incentive to find the truth. It is doubtful whether any great discoveries have been made without a powerful emotional drive. All fruitful thinking must be committed to some practical, social cause.

What is Meant by Objectivity ?

Objectivity does not imply the sort of detached and impersonal standpoint that liberalism has demanded, as though only ideas that are entirely independent of social and historical perspective could be true. The partiality of a limited and selective approach may indicate incompleteness, but it does not necessarily imply falsification. All knowledge is selective. If we regard the partial as necessarily illusory then we can never find the objective truth about anything.

What really matters is not whether we approach our problems with certain presuppositions or urgent desires, but *whether the results of our inquiry are objectively verified*. Objectivity is not something we start with but something attained in the course of organised inquiry itself. It is the result of the internal controls and self-corrective methods of science.

Scientific ideas are objective, firstly, because they are the products of a co-operative process in which all results are submitted to the test of public observations which others can perform; secondly, because they are the results of a process in which no ideas or assumptions are regarded as sacrosanct, but are subject to the continuing correction of experience; thirdly, because the right view is one which enables us to understand or cope with reality. We know that a theory is correct because the key fits, and because we see the man with the wrong key battering helplessly at a closed door.

The Role of the Intellectuals

Mannheim's solution of the problem is a different one. He believes that by becoming aware of bias the intellectual (but nobody else) may rise above it, expose the partiality of all ideas, and build a common creed that will bring all men together by synthesising the elements of truth in all the different points of view. Unfortunately intellectuals are as liable to bias as anybody else, for one reason because their work, just like other kinds of work, has become a commodity and they can be bought. As Marx said of the press: "It is true that the writer must make a living in order to exist and to write, but he ought not to exist and to write in order to make a living. . . . Freedom of the press consists above

all in its not being a business."⁴ The writer is treated by his employer as merchandise—to be sold, to increase circulation, to make more money.

The intellectual is supposed to elicit the unbiased truth from the conflicting ideological trends of his time, but truth is not going to be discovered by listening tolerantly to all points of view and putting them together. Science does not proceed by uniting opposing points of view, but by showing that one is false and the other true. The advance of science is over the prostrate forms of a multitude of false and exploded theories. The same is true in social science and ethics. The nearer we approach reality and objectivity the more clearly do we distinguish between illusion and reality, between falsehood and truth.

Mannheim and his followers by abjuring partisanship and producing a mish-mash of contradictory ideas are merely falling into the sloppy form of eclecticism which would harmonise capitalism and socialism, racial equality and race discrimination, religion and science. This is to be so broad minded as to hold nothing in the mind of the slightest value, like the broad-minded Duke in Chesterton's play who declared, "Why, everything's temperament, you know! It's her temperament to see the fairies. It's my temperament not to see the fairies. For her there is somebody there. For us there would not be somebody there. Don't you see? I believe in looking at both sides of a question, you know. Aspects! You represent the tendency to drink too much and you do good in your way. The Doctor represents the tendency not to drink at all: and he does good in his way. We can't be Ancient Britons, you know".

Ideology and Political Controversy

The importance of recognising the class interest behind ideologies may easily lead to the error of crushing arguments aside as mere bourgeois ideology, a procedure which, assuming the guise of a Marxist attitude, is in fact poles removed from Marx. Marx, as we all know, was always prepared to argue a case to the bitter end and never short circuited debate by asserting that his opponent's case was no more than the projection of a class interest. We have to beware of the dangerous habit of not taking arguments seriously, but of seeing in them nothing but a way in which deeper irrational motives and tendencies express themselves. It is quite another matter, *after refuting an argument*, to explain its attraction in this way, particularly if it is an obviously foolish argument.

Arnold Toynbee, in his discussion of Marxism,

⁴ Marx, *Debaten uber Pressfreiheit*.

falls into this mistake; he ignores the rational arguments for it, and explains it and disposes of it on purely psychological and sociological grounds. This is impermissible because, as in the case of all theories of the psychological, economic, or social causes of people's beliefs, the causes which prompt a man to put them forward have no bearing on the evidence which makes them true or false.

Toynbee is wrong and it would be equally

wrong to dispose of any anti-socialist or anti-Marxist case by brushing its arguments aside, without examination, as so much "bourgeois ideology".

Marxism is a scientific theory and as such it reflects objective facts and claims to be true in the sense that any science is true, that is to say it can be demonstrated to be true by rational argument, by observation, by experience and by testing in the field of practice.

Discussion contribution

On Culture and Socialism

Lionel Munby

MICHAEL COHEN, in his thought-provoking article *Culture and Socialism*, only touches on the reason why so many well-meaning intellectuals today are so futile in their concern with the "problem of communication". Sir Eric Ashby, in *Dons or Crooners*, one of the British Association Granada lectures for 1959, is genuinely concerned that the "millions should know something about science" and some of his suggestions for popularising science are intelligent and sensible. He bemoans the "lack of intellectual and cultural cohesion between the small majority of the population which is trained for intellectual life (largely selected for this training by the Welfare State) and the rest of the population from which this *élite* of intellectuals is drawn". Ashby believes this is merely a modern problem.

It is, however, not primarily a new problem, nor is it one which is due largely to technological advances in the means of communication. Discussion will remain superficial until it is accepted that we live in a class-divided society and that all class-divided societies have had at least two

cultures, two ideologies. The ruling-class of ancient Rome were Stoics, but the enslaved masses sought consolation in mystery religions. This kind of division within human culture is conterminous with the existence of class society. Capitalism may have worsened it, but it has also provided the means for ending it. Michael Cohen rightly points out that "capitalism is the enemy of culture not only because it limits the participation of the people in spare-time artistic and intellectual creation but because it debases the aims and experience of work". But he does not give enough attention to the fact that the development of capitalist society has only been made possible by educating and so raising the cultural level of the working people. Capitalist society created the working-class and the working-class movement which will bury it. It is this two-sided historical process which has produced the dilemma of modern capitalist society. The technical development of means of communication and their current use are the product of growing ruling-class concern with what goes on in the mind of the masses. This concern produced mass circulation,

before the radio or television or the cheap mass circulation newspapers existed.

Hannah More (1745-1833) published in 1792 a pamphlet attacking the idea of the French revolution, *Village Politics by Will Chip*; its success led to others; in one year her work had a circulation of two million copies! The Dictionary of National Biography drily comments: "the circulation thereof represents the approval of the classes whose cause she had supported as much as the taste of the persons to be converted" and "her success proves the advantage from the worldly point of view of writing orthodox didactic works". Hannah More is regarded as an educational pioneer; she was certainly a pioneer. Her educational ideas were expressed in a letter to Wilberforce, which explained that she taught children "such coarse work as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing for the poor". The unconscious irony of the D.N.B.'s biographer provides the best commentary: "her services to education at a time of general indifference deserve the highest praise, though her decided desire to keep the poor in their place is now out of fashion". Thirty years later Hannah More's practice, somewhat refined, was given organised expression by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (1826). Charles Knight, who became the Society's main publisher, had, in 1821, made quite clear the reason for diffusing knowledge among the workers: "The ignorant disseminators of sedition and discontent will be beaten out of the field by opponents of better principles, who will direct the secret of popular writing to a useful and righteous purpose." The tradition survives, a little tarnished in the publications of organisations like IRIS and the Economic League.

"Mass Media"

The development of "mass media", to use the current phrase — Northcliffe's *Daily Mail* and Beaverbrook's *Daily Express*, wireless, cinema and television—has only provided new technical means of doing the same kind of thing. Newspapers for the *élite*, like the Third Programme, to some extent still follow the *Daily Courant's* (1702-35) avowed policy of giving straight news "supposing other people to have sense enough to make reflections for themselves." The mass media give views rather than news and their news is carefully selected. An early Editor of the *Daily Mail*, long ago, gave the formula:

"What sells a newspaper? is a question asked me. The first answer is War. War apart a State Funeral sells more papers than anything else. The public takes a livelier interest in funerals

than in weddings. Next to a State Funeral comes a First-class Murder. After a First-class Murder, any big public pageant or ceremony will swell a paper's sales."

The use of capitals is revealing of the author of these words. One is perhaps thankful, if editors have not changed, that our Queen is young and healthy.

To understand why capitalist society is driven to bottle-feed the working class with larger and larger doses of an up-to-date, spiritual, Dr. Godfrey's cordial, is only to understand part of the problem. Precisely because the working class is more highly organised, stronger than ever before, it tends, like *Oliver Twist*, to ask for more and more, not only of material goods, but of all the things which the ruling class values for itself. There is a constant upsurge, a craving for cultural advance. An excellent recent example is in the quite unexpected rise in the number of children staying on beyond the age at which they might be expected to leave school (15 in a secondary modern and 16 in a grammar school). The Crowther Report (1959) is most revealing on this matter in its Chap. 7, *The Demand for a Longer School Life*. After pointing out that "our educational institutions have been moulded" on the basis that the children of the masses "should start to earn a living as early as possible", the Report comments that

"there are still those who believe that education is an expensive luxury forced on a reluctant people," but "the burden of the complaints which become increasingly numerous from parents in every kind of neighbourhood and occupation is that their children, through failure to secure admission to a grammar school, have been condemned to an abbreviated schooling. It is encouraging to find that the demand for a longer education is greater among the boys and girls than among their parents."

Now it is precisely this process which the well-meaning intellectual critics of the mass media fail to see, or, if they see it, to understand. A better educated working class is a necessity for the technical advance of capitalism, but the working-class demand for educational and cultural equality is an aspect of the class struggle; it must be dampened down or deflected. The working class must be persuaded that they should not really want what they imagined they needed and that it is impossible to give them it anyway. The central idea which is used to achieve this result is that there is a natural, biological, intellectual *élite*; intelligence testing has been used to give this idea a pseudo-scientific appearance. This idea runs through a great deal of reactionary and "progressive" thinking alike. Sir Eric Ashby's *Ron and Eth*

Blossom are suspiciously like the B.B.C.'s *Ron and Eff*, and very little like the working-class family he believes they represent. They live in Doris Grove and "nowadays anyone in Doris Grove who is interested in intellectual matters and who has an IQ of 115 or more can, and does, get out of Doris Grove", but do they?

"It is not the Mass, but the mass media which nowadays provide the common cultural experience in Doris Grove. And the experience does not pervade the whole of society: what unites Doris Grove does not unite Kensington or Cambridge. The million or so people who partake of the intellectual life of Britain, those who buy the Pelicans and go to the Proms and read *The Listener* . . . are untouched by the mass media which saturate the lives of Ron and Eth Blossom. Social stratification is becoming extinct: intellectual stratification is taking its place."

C. P. Snow thinks similarly in terms of intellectual stratification, though more subtly and in the higher grades; in his Rede lecture he refers to "alpha plus scientists . . . no country has many of them. Secondly, a much larger stratum of alpha professionals—these are the people who are going to do the supporting research. Third, another stratum, educated to about the level of Part I of the Tripos, or perhaps slightly lower."

So does the Crowther Report dealing with the lower grades; it divides the children in modern schools into three groups: "more than half [who] would have their education deflected from its proper lines by being prepared for an external examination. In the examinable minority, two groups can be distinguished . . . those boys and girls who have the ability to attempt some of the subjects in the G.E.C. at Ordinary level . . . about one third or rather more of the pupils in modern schools over the age of fifteen—for whom external examinations below the level of G.C.E. may serve a useful purpose."

"Innate Capacity"

Acceptance of this limited and stratified view of man's innate capacity, in one form or another, is common to those who argue that one cannot expand the universities because the number of those fit for university education is strictly limited and to the defenders of the grammar school against the comprehensive school. It leads to immense confusion in innumerable directions.

The false assumption is made that capitalist society and the present educational system make the most of man's capacity. Acceptance of this assumption has two consequences. It channels political differences into arguments about whether the existing intellectual *élite* is conterminous with the social and economic *élite* or whether the

career open to the talents needs to be enlarged. It removes from the field of discussion altogether the possibility of ending the division between mass and *élite* culture.

Sir Eric Ashby's blunt "social stratification is beoming extinct; intellectual stratification is taking its place" is in fact only one more form of the old argument that class division in society is inevitable, because it is a reflection of natural differences between men. This time the argument is subtly slanted to combine the quite contradictory suggestion that class divisions have gone. Just as the working class has come to understand that a class divided society is not inevitable for eternity but only a necessary historic phase, it is presented with a new argument for bondage; the chains are to be of nylon, not of metal.

Now the first thing to realise is that the assumption behind all these arguments is quite unproven. As the editors of *Forum* pungently comment: "if the experience of the last five or six years (and it is little more than this) has shown that 25 per cent to 30 per cent of modern school children should be given a more systematic education than was envisaged in the post-war period, why should the experience of the next ten or twenty years not show that this should apply to very many more of the modern school population". And if true at this level, why not at others?

Michael Cohen rightly points out that "socialism is the only basis on which the full development of the creative faculties of the mass of the people over the whole range of human work and activity can begin to be realised". Socialist educational theory and practice is not equalitarian in the narrow sense, not even in the sense that some people are more equal than others, but it does challenge the entire conception of stratification in education and its assumed basis in different levels of capacity in human beings. People living in and being educated in a collective help one another to develop rich individual capacities. No society has yet reached the limits, so why create artificial ones in the educational system?

Ivan Yefremov in his scientific, Communist Utopia, *Andromeda*, describes "the school [which] always gives its pupils the newest of everything and discards whatever is outworn", commenting: "If new generations repeat old conceptions how can we expect to ensure rapid progress?" It is only when society, and particularly its educationalists, accepts that the limits of human educability have not yet been reached, if there are such limits, that each individual will be enabled to develop his full personality. It is only on such a basis that a unified, and therefore fully democratic, culture can develop in society.

It is no accident that C. P. Snow, concerned with the divorce of scientific and literary culture, regards this divorce as "by and large a problem of the entire West", and notices that in the U.S.S.R. "the gap between the cultures doesn't seem to be anything like so wide as with us". It is no accident that he is able to state that "the Chinese... appear in ten years to have transformed their universities and built so many new ones that they are now nearly independent of scientists and engineers from outside"; or that while "England compares well in alpha professionals with the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.; this is what our education is specially geared to produce. In quantity, though, we are not discovering (again per head of population) half as many as the Russians think necessary and are able to find."

Must We Wait for Socialism?

But does this mean that nothing can be done to develop a unified and democratic culture until social ownership is complete? Of course not. The foundation of such a culture must be the raising of the educational level of the working class, and this has long been a target of working-class endeavour. Alongside the working-class struggle for economic emancipation and political power has always gone a struggle for educational opportunity and cultural advance. This has produced in a country like Great Britain, with its long established capitalism, an incredible range of institutions from working class choirs, brass bands and amateur theatres to adult education organisations of all kinds. These organisations are as much weapons, which can be used to emancipate the working class, as are trade unions and political organisations. They can equally well be blunted by the rust of social democratic illusions, and the chief illusion which eats them away today is precisely that only an *élite* minority will ever take part in their activities.

The importance of the part played by working-class organisations in the development of the present pattern of further education is widely admitted. The Ministry of Education pamphlet on *Further Education* states that: "Further Education has inherited traditions from its early days when the Mechanics' Institutes, the Polytechnics, Educational Association and the Y.M.C.A., the Trade Union and the Co-operative movements started their experimental classes and lecture courses for adults". Even so this catalogue omits all the efforts to create independent, socialist working-class educational organisations, from Owenite Halls of Science to the N.C.L.C., from John Maclean's activities on the Clyde to the Communist Party's schools.

Unfortunately, further education is carried on by a great variety of institutions in a highly complicated pattern of relationships; the position is further confused by artificial distinctions between different sides of further education which have been used to erect organisational barriers. Thus further education is divided into "that part... which has in a special degree a vocational objective", and "adult education", which is concerned with providing for "leisure time occupations in such organised cultural training and recreative activities as are suited to their requirements for any persons over compulsory school age who are able and willing to profit by the facilities provided for that purpose".

Adult education has been further subdivided by tradition and a bureaucratic passion for neatness into three parts — theoretical studies or liberal adult education, the foreign languages, and positive activities or hobbies. Certain voluntary bodies may provide facilities in one part of the field and be subsidised, but they may not trespass. So the absurdity is produced that for long the University Extramural Department and the W.E.A. might provide classes in the appreciation of music or the visual arts and courses in foreign literature, but they could not teach music, or painting, or languages, although all these are subjects quite proper to be taught inside Universities.

As far as the state is concerned, the participation of voluntary bodies in further education is limited, in effect, to the field of liberal adult studies. Participation in this field of adult education is small. The Ashby Committee (1954) pointed out:

"That not many over 150,000 out of some 31,000,000 adults in England and Wales attend adult education classes... only a very small minority of the population chooses to engage in [it]. The case for continuing it rests on the belief that this minority includes a very high proportion of 'exceptional persons'."

This bald fact, justified by the usual *élite* argument, is in extraordinary contrast to the hopes expressed at the end of both the great wars of this century. The Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction declared in 1919 "that the necessary conclusion is that adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there... adult education is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship." The Ministry of Education, still influenced by the euphoria produced by the passing of the 1944 Act, claimed in 1947 that "the potential student body [for adult education]... comprises the entire adult popula-

tion of all ages and of all degrees of ability and taste."

The first necessity, if adult education is to play its part in developing a democratic culture, is to expand enormously its scope. To do this the jungle of overlapping and competing organisations needs to be cleared up and the artificial barriers between vocational and leisure time education, between practical activities and theoretical studies, need to be removed. It is significant that in the innumerable discussions of present day apathy in adult education, which have taken place within the existing voluntary organisations ever since 1945, these two necessities have received scanty attention. This has been so because the major part of those taking part in such discussions have consciously or unconsciously accepted the inevitability of a cultural division in society and concerned themselves only with extending the market for an *élite* culture.

A Democratic Culture

The development of a democratic culture is only partly the responsibility of creative artists. It is very much the responsibility of the workers' movement and the state. For the development of such a culture requires the educational advance of the whole population. Only the state can provide the funds and the facilities to provide education for "the entire adult population of all ages and of all degrees of ability and taste". But only control by the working-class movement can ensure that these facilities are used to develop a genuine new working-class culture rather than to indoctrinate the masses with *élite* culture. This is why the full development of a unified culture can only come in a socialist society, when the state itself is controlled by the working class. But the British working-class movement has created within capitalist society a structure of adult education which can be greatly developed now and which can play a major part in the process of building a socialist society.

The peculiarities of adult education in Britain are many. First the state, that is to say the Ministry of Education and the local Educational Authorities, largely looks to a voluntary body, the Workers' Educational Association, to carry out liberal adult education in partnership with the universities. Secondly the W.E.A. is a democratic organisation in which the voice of the Labour movement, notably the trade unions, is strong, and could be stronger if more unions locally and nationally chose to affiliate and participate in the Association's affairs. The essence of W.E.A. democracy is in the provision for student choice of subjects for study, and to some extent of tutors

to teach them. The W.E.A. strives always towards an educational standard equal to that of university education and therefore its most advanced classes are taken by university employed tutors and organised jointly by the university and the W.E.A. Thirdly, since 1919, there has existed a W.E.T.U.C., or joint committee of the W.E.A. and the forty-odd trade unions associated with the W.E.A. But in this field the W.E.A. is not alone; the National Council of Labour Colleges exists solely to provide trade union education and has ninety-odd affiliated unions. Some unions belong to both bodies. In addition many trade unions have their own educational systems, and the T.U.C. has developed a central educational apparatus and established a T.U.C. College at Congress House. Some universities have educational arrangements made direct with the unions.

It should be clear from this how much overlapping there is. Proposals have been before the T.U.C. on several occasions for the amalgamation of the N.C.L.C. and the W.E.T.U.C. Can this be achieved? Would it lead to the unification of educational functions not undertaken by the T.U.C., by the Co-operative movement and by different unions?

The Political Issues

The illusion fostered by the past shadow-boxing over "independence" between the N.C.L.C. and the W.E.A. is that educational developments in the working-class movement are unaffected by political developments. At the moment the whole working-class movement is deeply involved in a policy debate over two fundamental issues: whether the working-class movement is or is not going to abandon its declared aim of building a socialist society in Britain, and whether the movement is going to support the policy of continued cold war based on the threat of nuclear deterrents or adopt a policy of peaceful co-existence based on rejection of nuclear weapons and general disarmament.

This debate is the latest climax in a long struggle between the genuine socialist forces of the Left and the entrenched bureaucracy of the T.U.C. and Transport House, through whom "the ruling ideas of [the] age...the ideas of its ruling class" are diffused through the working-class movement. In this struggle between socialist and capitalist ideas; which cannot end, whatever resolutions pass through congresses, until socialism is being built in Britain, the organisation of the Labour Party, of the T.U.C., and of many trade unions is at the moment controlled by the right wing.

A great deal of the best developments in

working-class education, in the past and present, in the N.C.L.C. and in the educational provisions made by particular unions, have sprung out of the socialist struggle for a working-class education which is really independent of the ideas of the ruling class. The organisational confusion is in fact the product of the battle of ideas, which ranges inside the movement. Many individual trade unionists and some trade unions are no more willing today than they have been in the past, to leave the sole provision for working-class education in the hands of the T.U.C. leadership as at present constituted. The creation of a single, all embracing, united working-class educational movement, however logical and economical it might seem, is out of the question for today. Its creation would only produce new divisions, new organisational forms through which minority views could find expression.

A united educational organisation

Does this mean that no changes are possible? I do not think so. Amalgamation of the N.C.L.C. and W.E.T.U.C. need not interfere with the existing educational schemes of particular unions; it would eliminate unnecessary overlapping, remove some stupid friction from within the trade union movement and save money.

It could do more than this for working-class education. If the united body functioned merely as an instrument of General Council or Transport policy, or to further ideas of class collaboration in industry, its creation would represent no advance. But need it be like this? The N.C.L.C. has been described as standing for "completely independent trade union education unsullied by subsidies from the class enemy". The W.E.A. claims that its independence has been guaranteed, in spite of accepting state aid and working with the universities, because it allows its students to exercise their own choice.

One can argue that in both cases much of the "independence" is formal rather than actual. But in so far as it has been and still is real, it is because no working-class educational movement can live unless it provides a real forum for argumentation between right and left, for discussion of the conflict between ruling class and working class ideas. A united N.C.L.C.—W.E.T.U.C. would only flourish if it accepted that this was its function, and to ensure this the W.E.A. tradition of "student participation in management" and student choice of subjects for study would need to be preserved and strengthened.

At the same time such a united educational body would need something of the freedom from day-to-day control by the organised working-class

movement that is granted to the universities by the capitalist state.

The value of a working class educational organisation distinct from those of particular trade unions, of the T.U.C., and of the Co-operative movement, is very real in spite of all the limitations which the present level of political consciousness in the working-class movement sets. For it is only in such an organisation that the problems facing the working class as a whole can be studied, however confusedly. At the moment trade union and co-operative educational schemes suffer only too often from being focused on trade union and co-operative matters in such a way that the students may learn all about chairmanship and committee work, negotiating machinery and industrial law, trade union or co-operative organisation—and all this is very important—but they learn nothing of the place of the working-class in society and only too often are left ignorant of other unions than their own, or, if they are co-operative students, of trade unionism in general. It has been largely in the educational work of the N.C.L.C. and the W.E.T.U.C. that these wider horizons have been looked upon, however dark the glasses worn by some of the tutors. Expansion and improvement would come from unification.

The uniting of the working class movement's own educational apparatus would increase participation by the organised working class in the wider adult education movement, and this would increase general participation. There is every reason for preserving the present partnership of voluntary educational bodies, the universities and the L.E.A.s, provided active working-class participation can be increased. Britain has this unique structure, under which popularly controlled adult education is aided by the universities and subsidised by the state. It is significant of the support for this partnership that it was Florence Horsbrugh's threat to cut provision for this form of adult education by 10 per cent which ultimately brought her fall from office.

A strengthening of the existing democratic structure of the adult education movement by the increased participation of the working class, which would come from the creation of a united working-class educational organisation, could bring far more people into active study, and could widen the scope of subjects studied and the methods of teaching employed.

The teaching methods used in adult education, while still too often limited to the formal lecture followed by discussion, do stress discussion. Student participation is an essential part, for the reason that adult education at its best aims at

increasing not only the knowledge and understanding of adults, but their capacity to act as intelligent citizens. Here, if anywhere, the battle of ideas which must parallel the class struggle in the economic and political fields needs to be fought. Out of this struggle alone can a new working-class democratic culture emerge. May I repeat some of the words with which Michael Cohen ended his article:

“Literature is only one aspect of culture, and there are many working-class activities which provide ample evidence of cultural aspirations. These are generally collective or practical in character, and in this respect may be a more natural expression of a working-class way of life than the writing of novels.”

Looking to the future

It may seem premature to speculate about organisational details of the way in which socialism will be built in Britain. But it should be clear that the structure of British adult education is admirably suited to fulfil in the future the tasks undertaken by Rabfaks, People's Colleges

and Arbeitern and Bauern Faculties in other countries.

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